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"I GO NOW TO MY COMMAND."

Frontispiece. Page 333.

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The Warrens *of* Virginia

A Novel by

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

AUTHOR OF

"A Carolina Cavalier," "Dorothy South," "The Master of Warlock," "A Daughter of the South," etc., etc.

Founded on the Play of WILLIAM C. de MILLE

Illustrations From

SCENES IN THE PLAY

G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY

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The Warrens of Virginia

Preface

I want to say two things to begin with:

1. In creating this novel around Mr. de Mille's beautiful play, I have been bound, of course, by the historical assumptions of the gifted playwright, and I have accepted them for the purposes of the story.

2. I have made little, if any, attempt to represent the peculiarities of the old Virginian speech phonetically. All such attempts must of necessity be futile and foolish. One can't spell inflections or indicate intonations with type.

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON.

New York, Summer, 1908.

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The Warrens *of* Virginia

BOOK ONE

The Breaking of the Bonds

CHAPTER I

A ROSE GARDEN INTERRUPTION

It was at the beginning of April, in the year 1861. The Virginia Spring was beginning to emphasize itself in a hundred ways. The shade trees round the Warren House had unfolded their tender leaves as if no longer in fear of frost rigors. The forests beyond the grounds had hidden their Winter nakedness under a cloak of new born foliage. The robins were bounding over the lawn seemingly intent only upon making manifest their gladness in the reawakening of the year—intent in fact upon a murderous pursuit of worms and insects that had imprudently ventured out of their Winter's hiding places in response to

the invitation of the sun and the soft south wind. The odors from the fields, where negro men were plowing, were laden with the peculiar, pungent fragrance of the newly turned, seed-hungry soil.

The messages of the Spring were those of peace, and nature took no note of the passions of men that were seething like a caldron in the old Mother State, or of the coming desolation which shadowed the land with a threat more appalling—if men had had eyes to see—than any that Virginia had known in all the years of her being.

Out into the broad, low, trellised porch, where the honeysuckles were preparing their invitations to the bees and the hummingbirds, there came a young man and a young woman. The young woman so manifestly belonged to the place that a casual observer might well have mistaken the order of things, supposing that the place belonged to her. The young man quite as obviously belonged to some other land than this. His perfectly fitting white flannel suit was obviously of Northern fashioning, and it contrasted sharply with the loosely hanging black broadcloth which Virginians of like quality with himself always donned when likely to be in the company of gentlewomen.

Still more sharply did his footgear emphasize his foreignness to Virginia. Instead of the high-topped boots which habitual horsemanship prompted the Virginians to wear, he had upon his feet a pair of shapely low quarter shoes, with broad butterfly bows at the instep. There had been silver buckles there when the shoes were made, but the youth had put these aside in favor of the bows, lest he be thought a dandy, which he was not.

In fact Edgar Burton was a very earnest, duty-loving young man, modest almost to shyness, and without even a possibility of insincerity in his nature, as Agatha Warren, his companion in the porch, had admiringly discovered during the month in which he had been a guest at Warren House.

He had been a classmate at Princeton of Agatha's brother, Arthur, and the two were most intimate friends. During their last long vacation Arthur had gone with his classmate to his home in a little manufacturing town in northern New York, not far from Lake George, where Edgar Burton owned a considerable manufacturing plant, inherited from his father, and where he lived with his widowed mother. But the two energetic young men had not remained long in the town. At the suggestion of his mother, young Burton

had taken his friend on a camping trip on the lake, in the close intimacy of which their friendship had grown stronger with every passing day, and still more with every passing evening. For it was in the evening, when the camp fire was ablaze, that they had opportunity for that intellectual converse in which both delighted.

They talked, as intellectual young men are apt to do under such circumstances, about books and men, and affairs, about philosophy of the most abstruse sort; about poetry, music and art—about everything, in short, except politics. On that one subject their points of view were so radically divergent that by tacit agreement they avoided it always. In that strained time politics had so much of passion in it that it was no fit fellow for friendship.

The two young men had taken their degrees together in June 1860. In the early Spring of 1861 Edgar Burton journeyed to Virginia to return his comrade's visit.

From the first he was fascinated with the life into which he was thus brought, and charmed beyond measure by the people with whom he was associated. The easy poise of the Virginia life, where every man's social place was fixed and known, was strangely attractive. The leisureliness of it, the absence of

struggle and strenuosity, was soothing to his spirit. The charming ways of women accustomed all their lives to be treated with deference, and equally accustomed to submit themselves in all loyalty to the lovingly protective control of husbands, fathers and brothers, presented to his mind a new conception of human relations and one that impressed him as altogether admirable. But more especially the institution of slavery as he saw it near at hand, took on a certain picturesqueness of which he had never dreamed. The cordially friendly relations between master and slave, and their devotion to each other were revelations pleasingly surprising to his mind.

"I have not abandoned any of my convictions with regard to the fundamental question," he said to Arthur after he had been in Virginia for some weeks, "but I think I understand you Virginians better than I did. We won't discuss the theory of the thing, but now that I have seen the practise of it, my mind is far more tolerant than it was. I have corrected many misapprehensions, and I am even able to understand how you Virginians can hold the opinions you do. At any rate, I shall never accept some of the misjudgments of you in which I have been bred. I understand you now, and it makes a difference."

Perhaps another agency helped to make that difference. From the hour of their first meeting Edgar Burton had found Agatha Warren the most fascinating woman he had ever seen—a more fascinating woman than any he had ever dreamed of as a possibility. Her beauty was of a type previously unfamiliar to him, but her beauty was the smallest part of her charm. Her easy grace of movement—at once languid and energetic—was a revelation to him. Her soft Southern voice and the touch of dialect in her speech made music in his ears. After the manner of young Virginia women she was proudly dignified and at the same time meekly submissive to an authority which she loved. He could imagine her defying death itself in defense of her personality, but the thought of her defying parental authority or breaking through the bonds of accepted propriety was inconceivable. She was at once a proud woman and a simple hearted, submissive child.

It was all so new, so unreal, so fascinating that the young man forgot all other things in his worship of the new-found loveliness.

This morning as the two met in the porch he bore a rose root in his hands. It had come to him by mail in response to a request he had sent to his mother.

"I have a rose bush here, Miss Agatha," he said, "and I want your permission to plant it in your rose garden. It is a Northern variety, and possibly it may not thrive in Virginia, but I think it will. Up north it would never survive a winter if we did not protect it against the frost, and it ought to be glad to grow here in your soft Virginia air. May it have a place?"

"Why surely, the best place we can find in the rose garden. I'll call it the Burton rose, and I'll give it a very loving care, for your sake. Come out into the rose garden and plant it."

The young man seemed not quite satisfied as she led the way to what he called her "rosabower," and with a young woman's quick wits she observed the fact. With childish frankness she asked:

"What is it? I've displeased you somehow and don't know how. I didn't mean it, so you must just tell me and let's make up. That's always the best way."

"It is nothing," he replied. "I was only wishing."

"What were you wishing? You *must* tell me, you know. You always tell me things when I say 'must'."

"I was only wishing you might give my rose

tree a different name—calling it and me 'Edgar' instead of 'Mr. Burton.' You know I'm going away to-morrow, perhaps for a long time, and I should like to feel that you cared enough for me to call me Edgar in your thoughts."

"That's a very good suggestion," she answered, fencing a little. "I'll call the bush the Edgar Rose, and when you come to see us next spring you shall find it climbing all over the trellis and showing our Virginia roses how to bloom. Here's a beautiful spot to plant it in, and here's the trowel. You must plant it all by yourself, you know, so that I may think of it as altogether your gift."

But the young man was less skilled than she in the art of planting, and she was really very anxious that his rose bush should thrive. So she dropped upon her knees by his side and with her own slender fingers helped him press the earth lovingly around the tender rootlets. A vagrant tress of her hair brushed his cheek, and in their mutual eagerness to press the earth well into place, her hand came into contact with his.

What followed was quite inevitable—the consequence of an efficient cause. He grasped her hand and helping her to her feet stood facing her with all the passion of his intense

but habitually self-repressed nature let loose and glowing in his face.

"I love you, Agatha!"

That was all he said—all he could say for a time, as they two stood there, looking into each other's eyes.

The girl's first impulse was to release her hand from his and seek refuge in flight. But her dignity forbade that, and she stood still, waiting for she knew not what.

After a little he broke the silence.

"Have I startled you?" he asked with penitent concern in his voice.

"Yes, I—I think so—a little bit—but—you see, nothing like this—ever happened to me—except just once, and then it was only Tom Dabney—and—and that was so very different. It was just Tom—and—"

Here the strong pride of her race came to the startled girl's rescue—the courage of the Warrens, no one of whom, whether man or woman, had ever felt fear or shrunk from the telling of truth. Withdrawing her hands from his and straightening her slender person to all the height it had, she said:

"I hardly know what to say to you now. They say there is going to be war between the North and the South—between your people and my people. I must not accept—what you

offer me—from an enemy of my people or one who is likely to become our enemy very soon."

"I shall never be that Agatha," answered Edgar with that resolute tone which the young woman specially admired in him, and which, in her eyes, atoned for the sombre seriousness of his nature. "I cannot believe there is to be a war between the States. Indeed, Virginia is herself making that impossible by her brave refusal to secede. I cannot think that New York, New England and the other States that accepted Virginia's invitation and helped her statesmen to form the Union, will ever quarrel to the breaking point with the old Mother State. I cannot believe that Virginia—whose statesmen were the first to propose 'more perfect union'—Virginia, whose Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, whose Patrick Henry was the mightiest champion of American liberty, whose Madison was the foremost advocate of the Constitution, and whose Washington led the feeble forces of the Colonists to victory—"

"Hello, Ned! Getting off your old commencement oration again for Agatha's benefit?" interrupted Agatha's brother Arthur in booted and spurred ignorance of the tenderness of the interview. "Well, it was a bully speech, and I wish Agatha could have heard

how the boys applauded it. Ned was our valedictorian, little sister, and he made the best speech ever. But, I say, Ned, the fellows have got a fox up and it's the last run of the season. You mustn't miss it. Shed those slippers quick and pull a pair of my boots over your trousers legs in no time. The horses are ready for us and the fox and the hounds won't wait, so your speech must. You can tell Agatha all about it, and 'elocute' all its superb periods by moonlight to-night. Come, hustle! The pack will come howling by in five minutes!"

"Go! You'll enjoy the sport," said the girl. "You mustn't miss it. How I wish ladies could ride to hounds in Virginia as they do in England! Hurry, or you'll be too late."

There is no record anywhere of the language that Edgar Burton thought in as he hurriedly drew on the boots his friend had brought for his use. There is no way of determining, after so great a lapse of years, what his attitude of mind was, toward foxes, hounds and horses, as he joined in a chase for which he had very eagerly longed ever since his advent upon the Warren plantation. Perhaps it is just as well. The squeamishness of this modern time shrinks somewhat from the printed reproduction of certain varieties of virile English.

CHAPTER II

IN AT THE DEATH

Edgar Burton was a thoroughly manly young fellow, strong of limb, robust of body and vigorously alert in mind. He had been a notable football player at Princeton, at a time when that superb game had not degenerated into a brutal exhibition of slugging. He had daringly sailed an open boat through the squalls that make Lake George one of the most dangerous waters in the world. He knew how to sit a horse in the English rather than the Virginian fashion, and he knew how to control the most vicious horse and compel him to his will. His spirit was full of enthusiasm and his enjoyment of every sport that involved danger and called for daring discretion, was keen almost to the verge of excess.

He had never seen a fox hunt until now, and the madness of its dare-devil recklessness seized upon him at the moment of mounting and possessed him to the end. The horse he

bestrode was the very best in the Warren stables—the best in all the region round about. It was Arthur Warren's own favorite steed—surrendered to his guest's use in that generous spirit of hospitality which prompted the Warrens to wish that their best should be always at the service of the stranger within their gates.

Knowing nothing of the sport in which he was engaged, Burton rode with less of discretion than he ought, but with the spirit of a mad man. At one point a fence too high for any horse to clear confronted him, and observing that its rails were old and vine-sapped of their strength, he forced his horse to breast it and break through it by sheer impetus, while the other riders were pausing to throw off rails and reduce the height of the obstacle. In that way he gained an eighth of a mile upon his competitors, an advantage they were unable to recover. When at last the hounds overtook the fox, he plunged into their yelping midst, seized the quarry and held it up to the view of the oncoming men of the hunt.

"Good for you, Burton!" exclaimed Tom Dabney, who was next in at the death. "You've taken the brush in your first hunt. I congratulate you with all my heart!"

"So do I, so do I, so do I," said one after

another, grasping the young man's hand with enthusiasm.

Only one in all the number offered no congratulations, and even he disguised his neglect of the courtesy by dismounting and busying himself with the saddle-girths.

"It was a splendid run," said Arthur Warren. "Twenty-five miles or more and twice across the river. I say, boys, you're all to come to the Warren House for supper. It isn't half a mile away, and I want you to back me up when I brag about the way Ned Burton rode. Father and Agatha would think me prejudiced. Come on."

"But, Arthur," said Ned, "surely you're mistaken. We must be twenty miles from Warren House at the very least."

"Do you think I don't know every tree around here?" asked the young host. "I tell you it isn't more than half a mile to the house. You're turned around, Ned. That wily old fox made a masterly double over by Sampson's mill, and came back over his own track. If the dogs had been ten minutes later, he'd have made the den from which he started. This is the fifth run he has given us since the tobacco was cut last Fall, and every time till now he has got back to his den ahead of the hounds. I'm sorry he's dead. But what's the matter?

Why are you riding with your right hand and keeping the other in your pocket?"

"Oh, it's nothing much. One of the dogs nipped me as I picked up the fox—that's all."

"The deuce he did! Let me see."

Thus urged, Burton drew his left hand from the pocket. It was badly lacerated, and there was one ghastly puncture of a hound's tooth through the wrist.

"I say, Charley!" called Arthur excitedly to young Dr. Charley Pelham, who was riding well in front, "ride back here quick. Ned Burton's all chewed up."

There was a spring near by, and thither the sympathetic group of horsemen repaired, watching with kindly sympathy while the young surgeon examined and dressed the wound.

"You're in for a bad month or two, Burton," said the doctor, as he drew his bandages into place. "Fortunately the tendons are not cut in two, but the muscles are fearfully lacerated. There! That's the best I can do till we get to the house. Then I'll take off all these rags and dress the hand again."

"Please don't," said Burton. "Just leave it alone, and don't anybody say anything about it, except that I got a little scratch."

"But why?"

"It might distress the ladies. Please don't let them know."

"Well, you're a trump, anyhow," exclaimed Pelham, in admiration. "But my surgical conscience simply won't let the thing go at that. When we get to Warren House you go up to your room to change your clothes, and I'll follow you and put a decent dressing on before you come down. I left my saddle bags there this morning."

There were seven or eight young men in the party, three of whom decided to go on to their homes. The rest accepted Arthur's invitation to take supper at Warren House, an invitation given quite as a matter of course and accepted equally as a matter of course without a thought on the part either of the young man or of his guests that anybody might be inconvenienced by their unannounced coming. In fact, nobody was inconvenienced. In such houses there was always enough on the table for a dozen more persons than were likely to be present, and the reserve resources of the kitchen were well-nigh limitless. Hospitality was so habitual that no special preparation for it was ever necessary. In part this was due to the lavish abundance with which the Virginians lived; in other part it was due to the fact that, however scant their supplies

might have been, Virginians of the Warren class would unhesitatingly have shared them with any guest without shame or shrinking, and without a thought that there was occasion for apology.

When Arthur brought his company of hungry hunters thus unannounced to the house, the only domestic consequence was that Aunt Molly Hatton—the sister of Arthur's mother—sent a maid to the kitchen to bid the cook "make an extra pan of corn batter bread and two or three more skillets of biscuit." For the rest, the welcome was abundantly ready.

CHAPTER III

THE HONOR OF THE HOUSE

Charley Pelham was a conscientious surgeon and a very careful one. He understood young Burton's desire to make light of his wound, and, to that end, to have its dressing finished in time for him to join the others at supper and thus forestall apprehension. But he refused to neglect any detail of cleansing and bandaging the torn wrist, lest harm ensue. It happened, therefore, that when the company were assembled around the supper table, Burton and Pelham were absent.

In response to inquiries, Arthur did his best to minimize the matter.

"Oh, it's only that Ned got a scratch as he was grabbing the fox. One of the excited dogs nipped his hand a little, and Charley Pelham is putting some rags around it. Did anybody ever see a fellow so eager, so daring or so reckless? Why, Agatha, you'd have thought Ned was leading a cavalry charge if you had seen him."

"I reckon the only cavalry charge he'll ever lead will be running away from us Southerners."

The man who spoke was the one who had omitted to congratulate Burton on his sportsmanlike triumph in the chase. He was a surly fellow at best, and he was almost insanely jealous of Ned Burton. He was socially not quite in the class to which the Warrens belonged. His position was sufficiently good to secure him a welcome whenever he went to the Warren house, but it was, nevertheless, inferior, under the unwritten laws of Virginian aristocracy. He had not long before presumed so far as to ask Colonel Warren's permission to address Agatha. Colonel Warren had softened his refusal in every way he could, but he had made it very positive. Not long afterward Ned Burton had come to Warren House as a guest, and during his stay there his intimacy had been such as to give rise to a general conviction that he had found favor in Agatha's eyes. Hence the bad blood in the veins of the surly one—Alfred Blake, who had made it worse by taking too many drams during the day. The temper of the time was angry toward Northern men at any rate, and Blake, perhaps, reckoned upon that to secure sympathy with his hatred of young Burton.

The words spoken at the supper table were heard only by those who sat very near the speaker, because at the moment the others were talking at the top of their voices concerning the exciting events of the hunt. But Agatha heard them, and so did her brother Arthur, and both resented them, each in characteristic fashion. Arthur sprang up, with eyes flashing and full of anger, but Agatha managed to speak first.

"You forget yourself, sir. Mr. Burton is a guest in Warren House, and if you were a gentleman you would not say insulting things about him here. Dick," addressing the servant, "take Mr. Blake's plate from the table. Mr. Blake, I beg that you will take your leave at once."

Arthur was still standing and his attitude so far attracted the attention of the rest of the company as to put a stop to the conversation. At that moment Dr. Pelham and Ned Burton entered. Blake still sat sullenly, but seeing Burton, he broke forth with an indiscretion born of jealous rage and rendered reckless by alcoholic stimulation.

"Yes, I know he is a guest here—the sneak and spy. I'm going, Miss Agatha, but first I want to ask that Yankee if he dares go with me."

Burton started toward his antagonist with blind fury in his eyes, but Pelham restrained him.

"Not here, not here," he said. "Wait."

In the meantime Colonel Warren, pale to the lips, but as coolly self-restrained as if he had been leading troops in battle, rose to his full, slender height of six feet, and with a wave of the hand silenced all voices but his own. Then, without a ruffle in his tone, and with no sign of excitement but the pallor of his sharply featured face, he said:

"It was a mistake on my son's part, Mr. Blake, to invite you to Warren House, but as it was a generous mistake, I freely forgive it. Now that you have seen fit to abuse a hospitality too generously extended to you, by insulting a guest of mine, my daughter has requested you to leave my house. If you hesitate longer to comply with her request I shall be under the distressing necessity of putting you out by force. Go, sir, and go quietly. Dick, order Mr. Blake's horse and remain with him in the porch till it is brought."

Then turning to his other guests he said:

"I need hardly say how deeply I regret this unfortunate and unseemly occurrence. Now let there be not another word said about it. I wish to regard the incident as closed. Tell me,

Ned, is your hand badly hurt? That reminds me that I haven't yet congratulated you on your prowess."

There was a certain masterfulness in Colonel Warren's manner which nobody was disposed to resist, and throughout the evening no reference of any kind was made to the matter he had placed under conversational ban. But when the other young men had left and only Pelham, who was to pass the night there, remained, Edgar Burton sought his advice.

"You see, Doctor," he said, "I don't know anything about this sort of thing, and naturally I can't consult Colonel Warren or Arthur. Won't you tell me what I ought to do in this case?"

"Why, nothing, of course. How can you do anything? As your host, Colonel Warren has undertaken to—oh, well, he's made it his affair. You can't meddle in it any more than you could countermand his orders to his overseer. It would be an affront to him."

"But can't I resent what that fellow said?"

"Certainly not. Colonel Warren has done that already by ordering the man out of his house. It's his quarrel now. If you do anything about it, he will take your meaning to be that he has somehow fallen short of his duty in protecting his guest. Besides, I thought

you didn't believe in the code, and all that sort of thing?"

"I don't—up North—but here it's different."

"I see, 'Evil communications corrupt good manners,' and you've been in Virginia long enough to adopt our bad habits. Anyhow, you can't do anything in this case."

"But won't Blake challenge Colonel Warren?"

"Challenge him? Why, Ned, you're a humorist. He'd as soon think of challenging the Governor of Virginia—sooner, in fact, for the Governor couldn't horsewhip him with propriety, while Colonel Warren could and would. Don't you understand? Blake isn't in our class. He was very nearly in it until to-night, but he is clear out of it now. He has violated all the proprieties in a way that must forever exclude him from recognition as a gentleman. He will never again be permitted to join gentlemen even in a fox hunt. He's utterly out of it."

"But I thought a gentleman down here had to accept anybody's challenge."

"Any gentleman's, yes. But—really, you're very— Well, of course, you're not used to these things. Blake isn't in our class. If he should send a challenge to Colonel Warren, it

would be the duty and the privilege of that gentleman to horsewhip him for his impertinence, and Colonel Warren would do it, you may be sure."

"But suppose Blake shouldn't recognize the duty or the privilege? Suppose he should draw a pistol—"

"He probably would. But in that case it would be a question of who was quickest on trigger, for, of course, Colonel Warren would have his pistol out and cocked in advance. Besides, it would— Well, you see, if he did Colonel Warren any harm, Arthur would settle with him. Nothing of the kind will happen. The story of to-night's doings will be known throughout the county to-morrow, and the result will be that Blake will suddenly discover some urgent occasion to go to Richmond for a few months."

Burton sat reflecting for a while. Then he said:

"It doesn't seem quite fair."

"What doesn't?"

"Why, that the man can't have a fair and equal show in such a case. It seems to me he's entitled to a fight if he wants it, and if I were permitted, I'd give it to him."

"Why, you're chivalric, Ned—extravagantly so. You see Blake has forfeited his right to be

treated as a gentleman, by behavior such as no gentleman could be guilty of. There isn't a man in this county who will hereafter think of him in that way. I suppose you can't understand that—it is so different up North—but the facts are as I tell you."

After another pause Burton said:

"Somehow I can't imagine Colonel Warren horse-whipping a man, or doing anything else violent. He is so mild mannered, so considerate of everybody's feelings, so gentle."

"After you have lived a little longer, Ned, you'll understand that that is the most dangerous type of man imaginable. It is only calm, placid summer afternoon skies that give birth to cyclones and tornadoes."

CHAPTER IV

REJECTED LOVER MODELS

During his visit at Warren House, Edgar Burton had developed an exaggerated sense of propriety, especially with respect to points of honor, and of the etiquette of honor.

He was by nature and breeding a gentleman, just, kindly, considerate and inflexibly upright. But he had never before lived in surroundings so sensitive. He had never lived among people who held themselves so rigidly to the nicer obligations of courtesy in conduct. These things impressed him deeply and favorably. He saw how greatly they ameliorated the conditions of life, how much of graciousness they added to human intercourse.

As might have been expected in such a case, he promptly bettered the lesson he had learned and became even more exacting with himself, as to such matters, than was customary among those from whom he had caught the spirit of it all.

When the excitement of the fox hunt and

the events following it had passed away Ned Burton's conscience took him severely to task upon a charge of gross discourtesy to his host, in having paid his addresses to the daughter of the house without first seeking permission. He had not intended this. He had been surprised into it. This trouble of the inner man, added to the pain that his wounded wrist gave him, rendered his night a well-nigh sleepless one. In the morning his first care was to seek out his host and ask for an interview with him.

"I feel that I owe you an apology, Colonel Warren," he began, only to be quickly interrupted:

"I'm perfectly sure you don't, my boy. I cannot imagine your doing anything intentionally for which you need apologize, and if you've done anything unintentionally, why you're fresh enough from college to know that the moral quality of every act lies in the intent with which it is done. What is it that's troubling you, Ned?"

"You are very generous, Colonel, and certainly this thing was unintentional—at any rate when it occurred. It was surprised out of me by circumstances—I'm afraid I don't make myself clear—you see, in a matter of this sort one doesn't always know beforehand."

"My dear boy, your explanation is as lucid as a page of Sanskrit or broken China. What the deuce are you trying to say? Oh, never mind telling me. Whatever it is I know it was honorable and right, and I forgive you with all my heart, without any apology at all. I'm sorry you feel obliged to leave us so soon. We're all sorry. You must come and see us some more, and stay longer next time. You haven't had half as good a time as we all wanted to give you."

By this time, and under the genial kindliness of the Virginian's courtesy, the young man had recovered himself.

"You are the kindest, most generous man I ever met, Colonel Warren," he said, "and for that very reason I feel that I must tell you of this. Frankly, I've been betrayed by my feelings into paying court to Miss Agatha without first asking your permission."

"Is that all?" asked the elder man, rising, grasping Burton's hand and laughing heartily. "Why, my dear boy, at your age I made love to Agatha's mother night and day for a month without ever thinking of asking anybody's permission. I didn't ask even hers. In fact, she ordered me to quit half a dozen times, and I wouldn't do it." Then more seriously he added: "Ned Burton, you're a gentleman, and

as such you are entitled to pay your court to any gentleman's daughter. You have nothing under the sun to apologize for, but I'm right pleased with you for wanting to tell me. It is a compliment to me, sir, and I appreciate it. May I ask if your suit has prospered?"

"I am sorry to say it has not. Our interview was interrupted, it is true, but not before Miss Agatha had made it clear that she could not respond, as I had ventured to hope she might, to my feeling. She was kind enough to soften the rejection by referring to the disturbed state of the country and the possibility of a war between the sections, but her refusal was definite enough."

"My dear boy, you mustn't let a little rebuff like that discourage you. Agatha is—let me see—she's only seventeen, I think—too young to know her own mind, and, of course, the threatening condition of the country is a disturbing factor in all calculations at this time. But all that will pass away soon, and then you must come and see us some more. You have my hearty approval, you know."

"I thank you, Colonel, far more than I can tell you in words. I shall leave for home tomorrow afternoon so as to catch the next steamer from Norfolk."

The two talked on, the young man trying to

make the older one understand how greatly he appreciated the hospitality of Warren House, and how truthfully he could say that he had never enjoyed any month in his life as he had the one spent in Virginia.

Meanwhile Agatha was interviewing her chronic lover, Tom Dabney, out in the rose garden. She showed him the rose tree Ned Burton had planted, and told him how she hoped it would find the Virginia sunshine and soil so congenial that it would outgrow all the other vines in the garden. Tom found or made an opportunity to press his suit again, between her sentences, but she was so far used to that that she easily parried his importunity.

"How I wish you could love me, Agatha," he said.

"Why, of course I love you, Tom. I've loved you ever since we used to make flutter mills together and put them in the branch out there. But don't you, can't you understand that it isn't the sort of love you're talking about, and never can be? Why, that's as absurd as if you were Arthur. I think of you just as I do of him. I wish you'd quit talking to me about—well, about the other sort of thing. You know you don't mean it, and if you did it would be foolish. Now, I'm going to tell you something. Edmonia Pelham is coming to-day, and you've

simply got to make love to her for my sake, Tom. You're in love with her already, you know."

"Why do you think that, Agatha?"

"I don't think it—I know it. You're awfully afraid of her, just as you never were of me. That means that you love her as you don't love me. Let me tell you, she isn't a bit dangerous —especially to you. There, I mustn't say another word about that. Besides, there's something else. Mr. Burton is going away to-morrow."

"Yes, I know. He's a good fellow, if he is a Northerner. He's queer, but that's only his Northern way; and he's the sort of fellow that you can tie to. I'd do anything for Ned Burton."

"Would you really, Tom?"

"Yes, of course I would. I tell you, he's a *white* man."

"Do you suppose he'll be insulted on his way to Richmond—I mean by men like that fellow Blake? You see, he is our guest, and I shouldn't like him to have any trouble with low-bred creatures of that sort in leaving us. Of course, Arthur will see him on board the train, but it wouldn't do for Arthur to offer to go to Richmond with him and see him on board the boat for Norfolk. It would look as

though we thought he needed protection, and he would resent that. He's high spirited, you know."

"Miss Agatha," said Tom, in his habitually drawling tone which robbed his utterances of all seeming of impulse, "it just occurs to me that I've got to go to Richmond to-morrow, and, fortunately, I've got to take the same train Ned Burton's going on. In these troubled times I never travel without a navy six-shooter on me, but I don't reckon he'll mind that. There are a lot of things I want to talk with him about."

Agatha looked him in the face as he spoke. Then she said:

"You're a dear, good fellow, Tom. Sometimes I almost wish you and I hadn't made flutter mills together. But we did, you know. And, after all, Edmonia is really your style of girl. You must just live at Warren House while she's here. You don't think anybody will insult Mr. Burton on the way to Richmond?"

"I think not. You know, Agatha, there are coroners in every county, and they are always glad of a job."

"Thank you, Tom. Come back soon. Remember Edmonia will be here."

CHAPTER V

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

The situation of affairs throughout the country was such as had never been known before or dreamed of as a possibility, and no man, North or South, could reasonably conjecture what the outcome would be.

Mr. Lincoln had been elected President by an exclusively Northern vote. Not one ballot for him had been cast in the Electoral College by any man representing a Southern constituency. His party had declared in its platform that it had no purpose to interfere with the right of any State to regulate its own domestic institutions in its own way and at its own free will. But that pledge was not accepted by large numbers of men at the South. These argued that the party which had elected Mr. Lincoln was composed exclusively of those who opposed the Southern institution of African slavery; that it included among its supporters not only those who objected to the extension of slavery into the territories, but

also those who advocated the forcible abolition of slavery by fiat—those who asserted the existence and the dominance of a "higher law" than the Constitution.

Seven of the cotton States, led by South Carolina, had adopted ordinances of secession from the Union, and these had allied themselves together as "The Confederate States."

In spite of clamorous urging the people of Virginia had refused to join in this movement for the dissolution of the Union. On the fourth of February, 1861, Virginia had elected a Constitutional Convention to deal with the problem, and, in response to public sentiment in Virginia, a strong majority of that Convention was composed of men opposed to secession. So great was the influence of Virginia that not only the border States—Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri—but also North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas, postponed action to await the decision of the old Mother State, and without Virginia and the States whose course was dependent upon hers, the secession movement was obviously destined to speedy failure.

Accordingly, an onslaught of impassioned eloquence was brought to bear upon Virginia, in the hope of controlling her final decision one way or the other.

To this eloquence—and in opposition to

secession—Colonel Warren had contributed his full share, with effect. As a great plantation owner, his influence was impressive. As a man who had been chosen to represent the people in the State Senate whenever he deemed the questions at issue of sufficient importance to justify the surrender of his ease to public duty, his voice was influential in an unusual degree. As a fighter who had won his brevet rank as Colonel by special gallantry of conduct in the Mexican War, his views upon the present situation were open to no possible question upon grounds of fear.

His pleading had been for the maintenance of the Union. His contention had been that the election of Mr. Lincoln afforded no reasonable ground for secession.

Affirmatively, and with all the fervor of a passionate eloquence, he recalled the history of the formation of the Union at Virginia's instance and largely by the endeavors of Virginia's statesmen. He insisted upon the vital necessity of maintaining the Union as the only secure bulwark of human liberty existent anywhere upon earth. As Cato ended every speech with the declaration, "Carthago delenda est," so Colonel Warren ended all his addresses with the declaration that he had rather see every negro in the South, including his own, set free

by illegal and unwarranted exercise of Federal authority, than consent to the destruction of a Union which he held to be "the world's last hope of the liberty of man."

He refused to be a candidate for membership in the Convention, lest his words in behalf of the Union should be interpreted as inspirations of self-seeking, but his eloquence was so great and so persistent that it attracted the attention of those at the North, and particularly at Washington, who hoped that Virginia might hold out to the end, and, by her influence prevent the calamity of war.

These did not understand him, any more than they understood the rest of the Virginians of that time, and it was because of that misunderstanding that an old friend and comrade of his was sent to see him at this juncture, arriving at Warren House on the very day of Ned Burton's departure.

This old friend was Captain William Griffin, of the United States Army, serving at the time on the staff of General Winfield Scott. He and Colonel Warren had served together in the Mexican War, and had been intimates ever since—so intimate, indeed, that Griffin, being unmarried, had passed every vacation allowed him during the fourteen years as a familiar guest at Warren House.

He came now upon a mission of great importance and extreme delicacy. Directly he represented General Scott; in very fact he was charged with his delicate duty of negotiation by President Lincoln himself.

It was the hope both of General Scott and of Mr. Lincoln that those influential men of Virginia who were so stoutly standing out for the Union—Jubal Early, Williams C. Wickham, John Minor Botts, Henry A. Wise, Colonel Warren, and the rest—would side with the Union to the last, even if war should be the issue. Their attitude was grievously misunderstood and so was that of Virginia. There was confidence felt at Washington that the Old Dominion's resolute refusal to join in the secession movement, carrying with it, as it did, a like refusal on the part of other States, would endure to the end. There was equal confidence felt that such men of Virginia as these would side with the Union in case of war, lend their influence in the raising of troops, and themselves serve as the military leaders of their Virginians.

It was upon this misapprehension that Captain Griffin—"dear old Bill Griffin," Colonel Warren called him—visited Warren House at the beginning of April, 1861.

"Your course in this crisis, Buck, has been

observed with very great pleasure," he said to his old Mexican War comrade, when they two were left alone over a mint julep. "You will never know how greatly your service to the Union cause is appreciated. Now General Scott has asked me to come down here to see you. He authorizes me to say that a brigadier-general's commission is yours, if you'll accept it, and you know him well enough to know he wouldn't make such an offer if he hadn't authority to do it."

Colonel Warren was refilling his long-stemmed Powhatan pipe when Griffin finished speaking. He completed the operation, and lighted the pipe from the coal that a negro chap had brought from the kitchen, before saying a word in reply. Then, in the peculiar drawl which climate and habit had bred in the Virginian speech, he said:

"My dear old Bill Griffin, if any other man on earth but you had brought me a message of that kind, I'd have thrown that decanter at his head. You're a privileged character. You've been that ever since you pulled me out of that hot place at Buena Vista at risk of a court-martial for disobedience of orders. But, damn it, Bill, you people don't seem to understand. Let me tell you, and you can tell General Scott, that if a war comes out of this

damned nonsense, Virginia will be with the South, and in the lead, too, and if you or General Scott happen to want to see old Buck Warren you'll have to look for him somewhere on the firing line."

"But, Warren," interrupted the other, "I don't understand. You've said harder things about secession and all that than I ever heard anybody up North say, and you've said them on the stump, right here in Virginia. Why, we're counting on you and Early and Wickham not only to defeat secession in Virginia, but to win renown for yourselves, fighting the battles for the Union."

"That's because you're a lot of donkeys, just as those crazy loons down at Charleston are, only your ears are cut on a different pattern. Let me explain. Virginia refuses to secede because the sane men among us see no sufficient reason for such madness. But we Virginians believe in the right of every State to secede. It may be foolish for them to do so, and we think it is; but we hold that they have a right to make fools of themselves if they have a mind to do so. If any attempt is made to coerce the seceding States, and Virginia is called upon for troops to help in that iniquity —for that is the way we look at it—why, Virginia will go out of the Union so quick it will

make your head swim. Those fellows down Charleston way are trying to force us out of the Union. They can't do it. But you people up North can, and I tell you you will if you make war on the cotton States and call on us to choose sides."

"But what if Beauregard bombards Fort Sumter, as he will within a day or two?"

"That will not move the Virginia Convention. I tell you, nothing the South can do will induce Virginia to secede, but a very small mistake at the North may drive her out in a hurry, and I go with Virginia, even if she goes to the devil."

"I think I understand your attitude, Buck, and of course I respect your convictions. But to me they seem absurdly without foundation. We won't go into all that. It's old straw that has been thrashed over a dozen times. But just in a friendly way—"

"Please don't. We'd never agree, you know, and if this thing is to be argued out with muskets and cannon balls you and I'll be on opposite sides, and we'll both fight like men. We'll both think we are mighty right—and as a man thinks so he is. We'll both be right because each will be doing his duty as he conscientiously understands it. This may be your last visit to Warren House for a long time—till the

thing's all over you know. So I don't want it spoiled by a lot of arguing to no purpose. Ruth is out there with the children, Bob and Betty. They're waiting for us to get through our 'business' so that you may tell them one of your stories. I'll call them in, and after the story we'll all go to dinner, you and the Warren family—my wife and her sister Molly, and Arthur and Agatha—and you shall have Bob on one side of you and Betty on the other, and we'll forget that anything like trouble between the North and the South was ever dreamed of. Ruth, bring the children in. Old Bill Griffin is here and he's going to tell them a story."

With the impetuosity of young cubs, Bob, who was eight years old, and Betty, two years older, hurled themselves into the house and climbed upon the sturdy knees of their lifelong friend, whose stories they held to be the most entertaining in all the world.

"Hold on, Bob! Wait a moment, Betty," said the laughing man of war, "I'm not a settee and haven't any rods between my legs to climb up by. If you'll wait a minute I'll lift you up—oh, you're up already, Betty on one knee and Bob on the other, just like old times. Now tell me how you are."

"Oh, we're all right," said Bob, "and we've got a pony—a great big one, and I can ride

and Betty's learning. What's the story to be about this time? Injuns or ogres or giants or pirates?"

"It's about Mexicans and Indians and other people, you young cormorant of sensations. And it's about me."

"Then it's a really, truly story?"

"Yes, you sceptic. It's as true as—well, as you are. Now listen. One day, a long time ago, when I was a young man not much older than your brother Arthur is now, our country was fighting the Mexicans. I was a young officer then. One day some of us were sent away out into the mountains to guard a pass. There weren't many of us and we had a hard time fighting the Mexicans, but we beat them off at last. Then they sent a lot of Yaqui Indians to fight us, and that was worse than anything else, because the Yaqui Indians don't fight fair, but sneak about and kill men even when they are wounded. Worse than that, if they take a prisoner they take him away up in the mountains and torture him to death. Well, one day we had a fight with the Yaquis, and I was sent off with two or three men to a point half a mile away from our other men. There I got badly wounded, so that when the rest of our men were driven away from there I was left behind, because I couldn't walk. The Yaquis

came and made me prisoner. They strapped me on the back of a mule and went off into the mountains with me. They intended to torture me and then burn me to death.

"When the men who had been with me went back to the camp and told about how I had been left behind because I was wounded, a young officer there swore terribly about it and called the men cowards. Then he went to the commander and begged for permission to take some men and follow after the Yaquis and rescue me. But the commanding officer wouldn't allow that, because he hadn't enough men to spare any of them.

"So the young officer decided that he would go after me himself, orders or no orders. He knew that if he did this without permission he would probably be court-martialed and shot for disobedience and desertion. But he didn't care for himself. He wanted to save me and he meant to do it or die trying. So that night he slipped out of the camp and started all alone up the mountains. He traveled all that night and all the next day, and far into the next night. He was nearly dead with weariness, and he was starving, for he had eaten up the very little food with which he had started. Still he didn't flinch, but kept on. He could see lights away up the pass, and he knew

the Yaquis were camping up there. So on and on he went till he reached the neighborhood of the Indian encampment. There he hid among the rocks and watched for hours till at last he found out where I was lying by a camp fire, with my hands and feet tied together with a horsehair rope called a lariat. Only two Indians were sitting by that fire. The rest were having a death dance, and getting ready to torture me and burn me to death. They were all drunk on a strong liquor called pulque.

"The young officer saw that the fire by which I was lying was just in front of a patch of high alfafa grass. He crawled cautiously around to that side of the camp and hid himself in the high grass. Then slowly, slowly, and making no noise, he crawled up to the fire. He had two great, heavy horse pistols in his belt, but he knew it would not do to shoot them. If he had done that the whole Indian band would have been on him in ten seconds. So seizing his pistols by their muzzles, and thus making tremendous clubs of them, he suddenly struck the two Indians who were set to guard me, but who were deeply interested in watching the death dance. He hit them both at the same moment, striking the back of their heads, and they doubled up instantly like a pair of meal bags."

"Did he kill them?" asked Bob eagerly.

"I don't know. We didn't wait to see. They were dead enough not to utter a sound or move a finger, and that was all we cared for. The young officer drew his clasp knife, and quickly cut the ropes that bound me. Then he dragged me out into the grass and together we dropped or slid down over a sort of precipice that we couldn't see in the dark after being in the glare of the camp fires for so long.

"We weren't hurt, except for a few scratches and bruises, and if I had been well we should have been all right. But you know I was wounded so that I couldn't walk. He and I cut some sticks and using them for crutches I managed, with his help, to make my way down the mountain for a few hundred yards, till we struck the main trail. Then the little strength I had gave out and I begged him to leave me there to die, and himself hurry on before he should starve to death. When I proposed that to him he turned on me like a man about to fight somebody.

" 'What do you take me for?' he asked. 'Am I a coyote or a coward or a greaser? I've come up here to rescue you, Bill Griffin, and if ever I get back to camp again you'll be with me, dead or alive. If you are to die here in the mountains I'll die by your side. I reckon

the wolves will relish my legs as much as yours.'

"With that he picked me up, threw me over his shoulders and started down the trail again. He was worn out with day and night climbing through the mountains, and worse still he was weak from starvation and growing weaker every minute, but still he kept on. After awhile we heard shouts behind us, and we knew what they meant. The Yaquis were after us. Quick as a flash the young officer cut a long, limber vine, made a loop in the end of it and swinging me over the cliff, let me down on a narrow ledge below. Then he grabbed the bushes, and climbed down. By that time the Yaquis had gone howling and yelling by the place, and we were safe so far as they were concerned.

"But when morning came we found that the little ledge on which we had landed was a mere rock shelf hanging over a chasm hundreds of feet deep, with the jagged rocks of a mountain stream's dry bed for its bottom. We had nothing to eat and no water to drink, and for my part I decided that we must starve to death or perish of thirst right there. But the young officer wasn't the sort of fellow who gives up. Instead of lying down to die he was up and doing from the first moment the day-

light showed itself. He soon decided that it was impossible to climb back up the cliff and regain the trail, even if we had wanted to do that, as we didn't, because we knew the Yaquis would be prowling about up there for days and days to come. But by lying down and looking over the ledge into the depths below, he after awhile studied out a way of climbing down to the bottom. It would have been easier if I had been able to use my legs, but as it was, he had a double problem to work out. From one point to another he had to lower me at the end of a vine and as soon as he got me to a bit of crag on which I could lie by holding to the bushes, he had to make his own way down, risking his life at every foot of the way.

All day we toiled, but by night we were at the bottom. We found a spring there, and the next morning the young officer managed to get some snails and a few birds' eggs for us to eat. Then he took two long poles, fastened them together with vines, and made a sort of litter for me to ride on. One end of the two poles dragged on the ground. The other end he held in his hands, and as a horse between shafts draws a buggy so he dragged me down that torrent bed. We reached camp at last and I owed my life to that young officer's friendship and courage and endurance."

"Did they shoot him, as he thought they would?" asked Bob in wild-eyed distress.

"No. They gave him some dinner instead, and then they promoted him."

"What became of him afterward?" asked Betty.

"Why, he fought through the war, was brevetted Colonel for his courage, and when the war was over he resigned and went home to see his wife, whose name was Ruth, and his two children, whose names were Arthur and Agatha. After that two other children were born to him. One of them was called Betty and the other Bob."

"Was it my father that did that? Was my father the young officer you've been telling us about?" Bob asked in eager astonishment.

"Yes, Bob. It was your father that did all that."

The boy was silent for a space. Then he said rather to himself than to anybody else:

"I reckon I've just got to be a brave man when I get big."

"Yes, Bob," said Betty. "It's what Agatha calls *'Noblesse oblige.'* "

CHAPTER VI

AN INTERRUPTED DINNER

Captain Griffin had scarcely more than begun the telling of his story to Bob and Betty when its hero slipped away from the room like the coward that he always was when anybody began talking of his heroism. But Ruth remained, with tears now and then trickling down her cheeks—Ruth, the wife of this gentle, simple-hearted hero, and the proud mother of his children, whom she was trying to bring up in the likeness of the man she loved and revered.

When the narrative was at an end, she warmly grasped Griffin's hand and said:

"Thank you for telling the children that, and for letting me hear it."

"Why, didn't you know it? Didn't Buck ever tell you about it?"

"No. He never tells me that sort of thing. If it had been you that saved him in that way, he'd have told me of it a hundred times. As it was the other way, all I ever heard of it was in a letter he wrote me at the time, in which

he apologized for having missed one of the infrequent mails. All he said about it was: 'When the last mail went out I was off up in the mountains with Bill Griffin. Bill has been indulging himself in his bad habit of getting himself wounded, but it isn't serious this time, and as there's no chance of a forward movement till supplies come up from Vera Cruz, he'll be in shape to pay his respects to the greasers when we call on them.' You see I've read all those old letters from Mexico over and over so many times that I know them by heart. Now I must go and look after the dinner."

"I've saved you the trouble, darling," said Colonel Warren, stalking in with the stride that in him always suggested an excess of reserve muscular power.

"I've told Patty, the cook, to roast half a lamb and a quarter of shoat, and I've been out in the garden with the chaps making them pick strawberries. Molly tells me there's plenty of asparagus, and chalots, and Arthur brought in a fine rock fish this morning. Of course, there'll be fried chicken, and of course she'll have turnips and potatoes, and by the way, I told her to boil a cabbage with some old Virginia corn dumplings cooked in the pot liquor. Old Bill Griffin's fond of them. You might give us some baked apple dumplings for dessert.

I did want to give you a Brunswick stew, Bill, but, of course, there aren't any tomatoes or green corn in April. If you will make your visits out of season, you must expect to go hungry."

"Oh, I think I shall manage to appease at least the sharper pangs of hunger, Buck, on the trifling things you've mentioned. If not, I'll fill up on corn pone and buttermilk."

"Yes, I know. You always were an abstemious eater, Bill. Down there in Mexico I've known you to seem perfectly contented after a meal consisting of nothing but a quart or two of frijolies, half a dozen tamales, and a bunch of young onions. Still, when you're a guest at Warren House, we like to give you something worth while to eat."

"My dear old comrade, you know very well that I'd rather dine on ash cake and buttermilk with you and yours than sit down to the most sumptuous banquet ever served, in company that I love less. I only hope you and yours may never be reduced to ash cake and buttermilk, but, if war comes, there is no telling what may happen. You Southerners are as brave in enduring as in doing."

"Then you don't like war, Captain Griffin, in spite of the fact that it's your profession?" Agatha asked.

"No, I don't like war. I hate and detest it, as every good soldier does. It is the abomination of desolation. It is legalized slaughter, not very far removed from murder. It is the costliest thing, too, in which men can engage. One campaign in the field destroys more than human labor can make good in a decade of years. Byron is right when he says 'War's a brain-spattering, windpipe slitting art,' but that isn't half the story. It is a widow-making, orphan-creating, home-destroying, hate-breeding art. Pestilence itself is greatly to be preferred. If I could choose to-day between seeing this threatened war come upon us and seeing the Oriental plague break out all over the land, I'd not hesitate a moment to decide in favor of the plague."

"You're right, Bill, and I heartily echo every word you have said. But it is to be remembered, also, that war breeds the manly virtues of courage, self-sacrifice, endurance, and—"

"It does nothing of the kind," interrupted the other. "It gives opportunity for the exercise and exhibition of those qualities, but it doesn't create them. They were existent in human nature before war came to challenge them. Women do not make soldiers of themselves, and yet women have those qualities in a far greater degree than men. Especially

they excel us in the courage of endurance—a far higher and more difficult form of courage than that of doing and daring, as you and I very well know, Buck—as every soldier who ever went through a campaign knows. But let us not talk of this. Let us not think of a war between American men on one side of a line and American men on the other side as a possibility. It is certain that the great majority of the people on both sides are very earnest and sincere in their desire that there shall be no such war. Let us hope that the sane majority will prevail and that the hotheads on either side—cowards at heart as most of them are—may not be able to precipitate the bloodiest war in all history and leave better men to fight it out."

"Amen!" said Colonel Warren reverently, and all the company at table, including the two little children, responded "Amen!"

Just as this prayer for peace went up, a servant brought in the mail. It was freighted with news so ominous that all hearts sank in sorrow.

Beauregard had opened fire upon Fort Sumter! The fort had fallen. Anderson had surrendered to resistless force.

"That is the beginning of war," said Griffin sadly; "and such a war as has never before

been fought in modern times. Americans against Americans—Greek meeting Greek."

"Let us hope for better things," said Colonel Warren, but there was very little of hope in his voice. "Virginia has not yet seceded, and perhaps she will not. She will not unless she is called upon to furnish troops for the conquest of her sister States. If that comes she will have no choice, no honorable alternative."

"How can it be helped?" asked Griffin. "Mr. Lincoln *must* meet force with force. He must resent this assault upon the national authority. If he did not the people would rise in their wrath and hurl him from his place. He must call upon the States still loyal to the Union to furnish volunteers. He must ask each State for its quota. As Virginia has not seceded, he must include her in the call and assign to her her proper quota. I cannot see any possible escape from that."

"I fear there is none," said Colonel Warren. "Still, I hope for the best. If any way can be found to avoid forcing Virginia out, there will be no very serious problem to deal with. We shall see, we shall see. Two or three days will tell the tale now."

With one accord, and in a common distress, all at table had pushed away their plates, hav-

ing no desire to eat and not much ability even to talk. The two old friends, messmates and comrades in arms, sat staring at each other in blank dismay. The thought that within a few revolutions of the sun they would be facing each other as enemies sat heavy on their souls, and their depression extended to the rest of the family. Even those young altruists, Bob and Betty, forgot their appetites and sat waiting for they knew not what of approaching evil.

Presently Griffin awoke to the necessity of action.

"I must get away from here, Buck, in a hurry. I must be completely out of this before Virginia makes of herself a foreign country and classes me as one of 'the enemy.' Will you order a horse for me?"

"Horses are already at the door," responded the host. He had realized this necessity before his guest had thought of it, but his instinct of hospitality had not permitted him to suggest his friend's departure. "I'll go with you to Richmond," he said. "Otherwise you might meet disagreeable people on the train. You'd better take the boat at Richmond for Fortress Monroe. It mightn't be pleasant traveling toward Washington by rail just now."

Griffin pooh-poohed the necessity of escort even on the journey to Richmond, but Colonel

Warren knew the state of feeling—especially among "lewd fellows of the baser sort"—far better than his guest did, and so he insisted upon going. He knew very well that not even the most desperate hothead of the time was likely to venture upon interference with any one for whom he was standing sponsor.

CHAPTER VII

AT CRISIS

It was between five and six o'clock in the evening when Colonel Warren and his guest boarded the train for Richmond. They expected to reach that city by midnight, so that Griffin might take the early morning boat for Fortress Monroe. But their train on the South Side Railroad fell into difficulties of some sort, so that it missed connection with the Danville Railroad at the Burkesville Junction. There was nothing for it but for the two friends to promenade the rough board platform and wait for the Danville train due there a little after midnight. After the fashion of trains in those days, particularly in Virginia, this one was an hour late.

There was still ample time in which to reach Richmond before the six o'clock sailing hour of the Fortress Monroe boat, but unfortunately there were long stretches of the Richmond and Danville Railroad on which the construction was primitive. On these stretches the

tracks consisted of iron straps, like wagon tires, spiked down to string-pieces of timber. It was the not infrequent habit of these iron straps to come loose at the end and turn up, so that when a wheel struck them it passed under instead of over them, and drove the curled up end upward through the car, in what was called a "snake head," derailing the train. An accident of this kind occurred on this occasion in the neighborhood of Jenning's Ordinary, delaying the train for so long that it was after eight o'clock in the morning on the fourteenth of April when it crawled into the station at Richmond.

There was no choice. The two friends went to the Exchange Hotel—at that time the chief hostelry of the city—and secluded themselves there. They bought all the morning papers and found them white hot with excitement. Those that favored Virginia's secession bristled with editorial clamorings for prompt action on the part of the Convention, editorial denunciations of the "cowardice of Virginia's representatives," editorial rhetoric of a heated sort in which the men who composed the Union majority in the Convention were eloquently stigmatized as "degenerate sons of illustrious sires." In one particularly intemperate sheet an appeal appeared for a "counter revolution,"

whatever the excited editor imagined that phrase to mean.

In those newspapers that had opposed secession there was a notable relaxation of vigor, a tone of apologetic pleading for still a little more delay, for patience, for hope, for waiting.

There was next to nothing in the way of news in any of them. The news instinct was not alert in those days and particularly in Richmond. Every newspaper there had a staff of gifted and impassioned editorial writers, but only one of them had newspaper instinct enough to maintain a capable correspondent at Washington to find out and report what was going on there.

This correspondent sent telegrams saying that President Lincoln had a proclamation ready for issuance on the next day—a proclamation, virtually of war, calling upon the States for seventy-five thousand men as a military force with which to restore the authority of the government in the seceding States.

He did not give details, perhaps because he could not get them. But in Richmond there was enough of excited imagination to supply them in abundance. There was everywhere a conviction that the proclamation would—and, indeed, must—call upon Virginia for her share of troops with which to make war upon her

sister Southern States. In the minds of many, however, and these included a majority of the Convention members, there was a lingering hope—resting upon nothing more substantial than reluctance to believe in the inevitableness of calamity—that in some way or other, by some unimaginable ingenuity, a device would be found by which Virginia would be exempted from the necessity of choosing between secession and what Virginia regarded as dishonor. There was nowhere any doubt as to what Virginia's choice would be if forced to choose at all.

The Convention met on that day as usual, and as usual it refused to adopt the ordinance of secession. The pressure upon it was such as few legislative bodies have ever had to resist. The whole town was aflame. Men were promenading the streets with cockades in their hats and palmetto flags pinned to the lapels of their coats. At every step one encountered groups of excited citizens questioning some leader or supposed leader of public opinion as to the outlook. Business was practically suspended. Troops of volunteers, uniformed and ununiformed, armed and unarmed, were pouring into the city to be assigned to one or other of the camps of instruction which had been set up at the fair grounds and at

Ashland. Never during the whole course of the war was there so insistent a show of military activity in Richmond as at this period of waiting for the cast of the die.

During the day Colonel Warren and his friend remained in their hotel rooms. Colonel Warren's presence in the city was a thing not easily concealed, and there were many callers clamorous to hear what he had to say in the crisis. To all of them he denied himself, sending word to each:

"I have nothing to say which can in any way help matters. I counsel my friends to keep cool and wait. We shall soon know what the issue is. It will be time enough then for speech and for action."

Griffin during the day sent a disguised telegram to Washington. The only reply it brought was a peremptory order, in cipher, for him to "Get out of Richmond before it is too late."

Early next morning the two friends parted at the gangplank of the boat for Norfolk and Fortress Monroe.

"Good-bye, and God bless you, Bill," said Colonel Warren by way of farewell. "The next time we meet it will be with arms in our hands. I'll expect you to give me the very best fight you can put up."

"I'll have need to do that," answered the other.

"I'm right glad you feel that way, Bill, for if your command and mine ever meet in the field I'm going to whip you if I can. Good-bye. Hope you'll be a major-general before the thing's over."

"I'm perfectly sure you will," answered Griffin as the gangplank was drawn inboard. "Give my love to all at Warren House, especially to Bob and Betty."

Thus were the bonds broken between the North and the South. Thus were friends set against friends, brother against brother as it were. Thus was the greatest war of modern times begun, a war in comparison with which other wars were scarcely more than skirmishes, a war in which the men on either side were equally confident that they were right.

Is it not true that both were right, seeing that both believed themselves to be so, and that each was fighting for conscience and principle?

BOOK TWO

The Struggle of the Giants

CHAPTER I

THE CALL TO ARMS

From the steamboat gangplank at the end of which he had parted from his friend in the amity of an enmity that respected itself and recognized the righteousness of conviction on the other side, Colonel Warren returned to his hotel and threw his doors open. He was a man of influence in Virginia, a man to whom his fellow Virginians had a right to look for guidance, for counsel and for leadership. Now that his duty to his guest was fully done, now that his hospitality had discharged itself of its uttermost obligation, now that he was a free Virginian again, he recognized the quickly coming certainty of secession which he had labored so long and so passionately to avert, and he recognized the new duty with all the candor with which he had done the old. From

the past he turned to the present, from the old to the new, from duty done to duty yet to do.

It is important to understand this man because he was a type multitudinously reproduced in that terrible time both at the North and at the South. He was, first of all and above all, an American. Bred in the school of the fathers, his love for the American Union was intense enough to justify gallant self-sacrifice on his part in its behalf. But believing, as he did, in that careful distribution of power for which the States had provided in creating the Union and framing the Federal Constitution, he did not doubt or question the right of his State to withdraw at will from a Union into which it had entered by its own free will and without any suggestion of obligation to do so. And equally he had no doubt as to his own honorable obligation to be bound by the decision of his own State, whatever it might be. If Virginia had remained in the Union, Colonel Warren would have fought for the Union under obligation of his allegiance to his State. As Virginia elected to secede, he stood ready to fight for secession in support of Virginia's sovereign right to decide that question for him.

Will the reader bear in mind that no plea is put forward here for or against Colonel

Warren's point of view? Will he bear in mind that all that is written here is in explanation of men's views and conduct, and not at all in advocacy of one view or another? To such men as Griffin and Warren—representing opposite sides in the controversy, and ready to fight, each in maintenance of the cause his conscience impelled him to espouse—there was no difficulty in understanding this. For the purposes of this altogether non-polemical romance it is necessary that the reader shall be equally open-minded and equally ready to recognize the righteousness of conscientious endeavor on whichever behalf it may have manifested itself.

It was on the morning of the fifteenth of April, 1861, that Colonel Warren returned to his hotel room, threw his doors open to those who were clamoring for counsel, and sat down to await results. On that day Mr. Lincoln at Washington issued his proclamation, calling for volunteers with which to suppress the uprising at the South. As both Warren and Griffin had foreseen, the proclamation called upon Virginia for her quota of the force demanded.

The proclamation reached Richmond in official form on the sixteenth of April. In the minds of the men constituting the Convention

and exercising all that was possible of State authority there seemed no choice. Either Virginia must join in a war for the coercion of sister States that had assumed to exercise a right in their possession of which all Virginians devoutly believed, or Virginia must refuse to do so by adopting the ordinance of secession, against which the people of the State had so long and so resolutely set their faces.

On the seventeenth of April the Constitutional Convention of Virginia, in which the sentiment opposed to secession had for so long held its own in the face of appalling clamor and denunciation, voted to secede and to cast Virginia's weight into the scale of disunion.

It was a thing reluctantly done—so reluctantly indeed that some of the Convention members voted against it even to the last, and a few refused to sign the ordinance after it was made law. Some of these were destined to win distinction as conspicuous leaders of the cause they did not and could not sanction, as fighters for the South in a war for which they saw no necessity.

Among the Union men generally, who constituted a majority of the Virginians, there was no such resistance to accomplished facts. These men held themselves to be Virginians first and nothing else secondarily. So long as

their State hesitated what course to pursue, they felt free to plead for their own views and convictions. When their State seceded, they not only submitted themselves to its sovereign authority, but set themselves to work to sustain the cause to which that sovereign act of the State had committed them.

Colonel Warren's course was typical of that pursued by all the rest. As soon as news came to him of Virginia's secession, he prepared a little proclamation of his own and telegraphed it to his home county. It read as follows:

"Fellow Virginians: Virginia has seceded from the Union. She needs troops with whom to defend her borders from invasion, and to her call she expects all Virginians to respond. I appeal to my neighbors to meet this demand with willing hearts and ready hands. I shall be detained in Richmond for a few hours on public business, but in the meanwhile I issue this call for volunteers for our State's defense. I am telegraphing to certain friends, asking them to go to the Court House of our county and there enroll as volunteers such of our able-bodied men as shall respond to this call. As speedily as possible I shall finish my business here and return with authority to embody and organize these volunteers for service. In the meanwhile, confidently reckoning upon a pa-

triotism that has never faltered in time of need, I shall offer the services of all my neighbors to Governor Letcher whenever he may call for them."

An hour or two after this despatch was sent there came a reply saying:

"Whole body of the county here. Everybody enlisting. You chosen by unanimous vote to command. Secure necessary commission and we will be ready."

Almost at the moment when this despatch came to Colonel Warren, there came to him also a messenger from Governor Letcher, with a note asking him to call at the Executive Mansion, and to take dinner there.

There came also another message. It was from Griffin, who had prepared it before leaving Richmond, for delivery after his departure. This is what he wrote:

"Dear Old Buck Warren: Obviously war is inevitable. Neither you nor I want it; neither of us thinks it necessary or reasonable, but it seems so ordered of Fate. My chief regret is that it finds you and me—old comrades, friends of the brother sort—on opposite sides. Still there is compensation for that in the thought that in this crisis each of us knows that the other is faithful to his duty as he understands it, and each is therefore right—in himself,

whatever he may be held to have been when History makes up her verdict. I would not have you soil that superb conscience of yours, even if it would decide the war in the way I think right. I do not believe you would have me betray my own convictions for a similar price. Let us both bear in mind, then, while the conflict lasts and after it is over, that other men—the thinking men on either side—are like-minded with us; equally conscientious, equally loyal to what each believes to be the right. Let us fight in full recognition of these things. Let us do our duty like men and leave the issue with God. Let no element of hate enter into our conduct. After all, this war is only the arbitrament by arms of questions that we have found it impossible to solve in more rational ways; but the hotheads and unreasonables on either side have forced this final appeal to brute force upon us, and we must accept the fact as we accept the vagaries of the weather and all other things inevitable."

At the very moment when Colonel Warren, in pursuit of his duty, was summoning his neighbors to enlist as soldiers for the defense of Virginia, his friend Griffin was hurrying North to organize volunteers on the other side in defense of the Union. And neither had aught of accusation in his soul against the other.

CHAPTER II

A PERPLEXING SITUATION

Edgar Burton journeyed northward in a mood of depression and disappointment. Agatha's rejection of his suit had not been positive enough to awaken his pride in resistance. It had suggested easy possibilities of reconsideration under more favorable conditions. He was able to recall every detail of that interview in the rose garden. What lover, whose love has not been scornfully rejected, ever found difficulty in doing that? And as he recalled it he saw more and more clearly that but for the obvious approach of war between the North, to which he belonged, and the South, of which she was a daughter, her answer would have been different. It was the prospect of war, and that alone, which had deprived him of the one supreme joy of his life. It was the shadow of war that had come between him and his hope.

He had never actively concerned himself with politics, but he had convictions, and these

stood now in his way. If he had been able to put them aside, as many a man does in obedience to impulse, he would have solved the riddle of his life by casting his scruples to the winds, returning to Virginia, and adopting the Southern cause as his own. There were many men who did something of that kind upon far smaller provocation. But Edgar Burton's conscience was the dominant force in his life, and he obeyed it even at cost of cruel self-sacrifice.

The only compromise he would make was this, that he would not personally enlist to fight his friends in Virginia until the need of men should be much more pressing at the North than it then was. For the time being there were men enough, ready, willing, eager. And, besides, the condition of his wounded wrist, inflaming now and painful, effectually excluded him even from the list of availables. In common with most other men at the North at that time, he expected the war to be a thing of brief duration. He had his factory to look after, his mother to comfort, and his own reluctance to consider.

At the same time he had his conscience to admonish him and in obedience to that he held himself ready to volunteer for military service whenever the time should come that needed him as a sacrifice.

It was the one great trouble with that confounded and confounding war that it presented to so many honest minds the vexed problem of a divided duty. In that respect it was unlike any other war in which Americans have been engaged, and therein lay one of the tragedies of it.

Edgar Burton's first care upon arriving at home was to send for a doctor. The wound in his hand and wrist had been neglected during all the days of his homeward journey, and it had become alarmingly inflamed—so inflamed, indeed, as to superinduce fever in his pulses.

"Your Virginia doctor did his work well," said Dr. Hunt, after an examination of the lacerated tissues, "but if he were here he would agree with me in saying that you have recklessly endangered your health by neglect to cleanse the wound and renew the bandages since you quitted his care."

Dr. Hunt was a scrupulous person on both sides of his nature—scrupulous as a surgeon in the exaction of surgical cleanliness, and scrupulous as a man in shielding an absent fellow surgeon from blame for what was not his fault.

"The best thing you can do now," he said when he had finished dressing the wound, "is to go to bed. I shall put you for the time on a

rigidly liquid diet, to avoid inflammatory conditions, and I want you, if you please, to recognize the fact that there are other inflammatory conditions besides those that are merely physical. I wish you would avoid everything of that kind."

In that imperfect way in which patients usually try to obey the orders of their physicians, Edgar Burton obeyed this one, having a feverish lassitude and an aching head to assist him in his endeavor. When a delegation called to ask him to enlist in a newly forming company with the promise of a lieutenancy as an inducement, he sent his mother to dismiss the visitors upon a plea of illness and of doctor's orders. But instead of taking the rest and sleep which his doctor intended, he sat up most of the night writing a letter to Agatha, and, as a necessary consequence, Dr. Hunt found his fever dangerously increased in the morning.

These are the difficulties with which conscientious men of medicine must frequently deal in their endeavors to get men well and keep them well.

His impulse to write to Agatha was complex in its origin, and had more than one controlling and convincing consideration behind it.

"Among the other valuable lessons I learned

during my stay at Warren House," he wrote, "was that of attention to the nicer courtesies of life. Of course, one ought not to need instruction in such things, but one often does when, as in my case, he has been brought up in a far simpler and even a ruder way of living. The first thing that impressed me when I went to Virginia was the gracious way in which you people greet each other with 'Good mornings' at breakfast time. I dare say the same custom obtains in New York and Boston, but I had never encountered it until I went to Virginia, and it delighted me—it and other things of the same kind. In our village life here I had never been used to anything of the kind. I don't think it is because we are surly, or intentionally impolite, for we are not. Whenever we drive out of the little town into the real country we say 'Good morning' to everyone we meet; but in town we do nothing of the kind, and in our simple life we never think of the breakfast meeting as an occasion for courtesy of that sort. I wonder that it is so.

"Now among the other gracious amenities that I learned in Virginia, and that I might have learned at the North, I suppose, if I had ever lived elsewhere than in a village, was that when one has been a guest in a hospitable house, his first duty upon reaching home is to

write to those who have entertained him to report his arrival. It seems strange to me that I never thought of that before, and I suppose you will think it boorish of me that I did not. But in all things I must be honest with you, Agatha, because I love you. That is the supremest reason for honesty and candor, is it not? It seems so to me.

"At any rate, I am thankful to the Virginia experience which acquainted me with this custom, because it gives me an opportunity to write to you. I shall write another letter to Arthur and still another to Colonel Warren, and, still mindful of my Virginian lessons in etiquette, I shall enclose this in an unsealed envelope, in my letter to Colonel Warren, leaving him to place it in your hands.

"What I want to say is simply that I love you and shall always love you. What I said to you in the rose garden was the sincerest thing I ever uttered in my life. I persuade myself that in rejecting my suit, you did not reject me or put my love aside with indifference. The unfortunate circumstances of this troubled time raise a barrier between us—a barrier to which you called attention, and which I ought to have recognized without waiting for your suggestion. But time will cure all that. I cannot believe that this war will

long endure, and so far as I can, I shall keep out of it. I cannot endure the thought of joining in a conflict in which I must oppose and seek to destroy those whom I love best in the world, those whom I regard as my most precious friends, those who mean so much more to me than do any other human beings anywhere upon earth.

"And yet, I foresee that if the war lasts long enough, if its exigencies become so great as to make it my duty to become a soldier, I shall have no choice but to obey the call of my country. I am sure Colonel Warren would say 'Amen' to that, and I am sure you would not misunderstand.

"Whatever happens, you will know that I have an abiding affection for Colonel Warren and all in Warren House, and that I love you, Agatha, with the only passionate love of my life. This letter is written to tell you that; and when all is over, if I am still alive, I shall make it my first pleasure to go to Warren House to tell you of it again. You were right in rejecting my suit the other day; you may find yourself right in rejecting it again when I come to you after the war, pleading for your love in response to my own; but I shall not make up my mind that that is to be the issue until you tell me so.

"The mails are still uncertainly open between the North and the South. I have hope that this letter will reach you. Whether it does or not, God bless you and keep you in His tenderest care.

"And all the time, whatever happens, be sure that my love for you, and my grateful affection for all who dwell under the Warren roof, are unchanged and unchangeable. Goodbye, until such time as I shall be able to confirm this pledge while looking into your eyes and telling you the truth with my own."

With that delicacy which was his dominant characteristic, Colonel Warren omitted to deliver this letter to Agatha until such time as he and she were alone. Then he handed it to her, saying:

"Ned Burton is attentive to all the courtesies. He has not only written to me, but he has enclosed letters for you and for Arthur. I like that young fellow."

With that he stalked out of the room, leaving his daughter to read the letter in private and without the suggestion of necessity to mention any part of its contents to the rest of the family.

He correctly assumed that she had rather not, and Colonel Warren was a gentleman.

CHAPTER III

VIRGINIA'S POINT OF VIEW

It was not without a definite purpose that Governor Letcher had summoned Colonel Warren to his presence.

"I need you, badly," the Governor said to his guest after the initial greetings were over. "We are in a positively ridiculous position. Men are enlisting by tens of thousands, and they all regard themselves as men fit for soldierly duty. Of course they will be, after they are trained and disciplined and all that. But at present—well, you are an old soldier, and you know what I mean. These men are electing their own officers—choosing them precisely as they would choose directors for a barbecue, and without the smallest reference to their fitness for military command. I've had to commission two captains and one major this morning, every one of whom I personally know to be unfit. There's a platoon of cadets from the Virginia Military Institute in town, and if I were free to choose, I'd make captains and

majors and colonels out of them, because they know at least a little about the business of war. But I'm not permitted to do that. I must commission the men the volunteers elect to command them, regardless of their unfitness, and the politicians insist upon coming first. The only way out is to get a lot of you old soldiers who know something about war to act as schoolmasters. That's what I sent for you for. I'm going to make you a colonel—you were brevetted to that rank during the Mexican War—though you were only a first lieutenant of volunteers in fact—and set you to teach those fellows the rudiments of their business. When the time comes to send you to the field I'll make you a brigadier-general, but meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile you are making a mistake," interrupted Warren. "I have seen service, it is true, and of course I can make myself useful in a camp of instruction. But you'll want and need more experienced men than I am for the higher commands."

"But where am I to get them? Does it occur to you that there isn't a man in all America who ever served in an army half as big as either of the two that will presently confront each other on the Potomac? Have you reflected upon the fact that with the exception of

General Scott, who is too old and too gouty for active service, there isn't a man on this continent who ever commanded an army of even two or three thousand men? Does it occur to you that on both sides in this war we must make brigadiers out of civilians, and set mere captains to command armies as major-generals and lieutenant-generals? There lies the greatest difficulty we shall have to encounter. We'll have thirty thousand men along the Potomac within a month, and the Federals will have as many more. Both armies will be commanded by captains who never in their lives saw armies of such magnitude, and who don't in the least know how to handle them. Some of them never commanded even a squad. We've got to let them learn their trade by perilous experiment, and heaven only knows what disastrous blunders they will make in the process of their schooling. I can't alter these conditions, and neither can anybody else. All I can do is to set men like you, men who have seen something of war to give rudimentary instruction to our recruits and more particularly to their peculiarly ignorant officers. I'm going to commission you as Colonel, so that from the beginning you shall outrank all the elected officers who come under your control."

"But what about the colonels and brigadier-

generals of militia already commissioned under the militia law?"

"I've eliminated them by the simple process of accepting the service of companies separately. Those bedizened gentlemen must enlist like everybody else, if they have any ambition to get into this mix."

"Then you want me to go to a camp of instruction?"

"I want you to go home first and use whatever influence you can bring to bear to induce the four or five companies now forming in your county to elect for their officers men who have at least some little capacity in a military way—men out of whom you think you can make good soldiers. Then I want you to come back here ready for duty. I'll have your work cut out for you. I may send you to command a camp of instruction or I may set you to the work of organizing. I don't know. Everything depends upon Robert E. Lee. I have definite assurance that he will resign his commission in the United States Army, now that Virginia has seceded. His will will be a law to me and to the South. Scott has called him 'the greatest organizer on earth,' and, so far as Virginia's forces are concerned, he shall have absolute control of organization. Of course, you know the Yankees have offered

him supreme command of all their armies, and he has refused?"

"I didn't know that, but I know Colonel Lee, and I love him, as every man does who served in the Mexican War. If we are to get him, as you say, he will be our Washington. I'm ready for any service to which he may appoint me. I'll be a corporal under him rather than a major-general under anybody else. Why, I think old Bill Griffin himself—dyed in the wool Yankee that he is—would have come to us if Lee had told him to do so. No, on the whole, I reckon he wouldn't, for Bill Griffin has a conscience—a nagging, pestilent, persistent, insistent conscience, and he'd take its advice even in preference to Lee's, but anyhow Lee will count for more to us than any other dozen or score of old army officers. I don't know what his views on slavery are, if he has any, but—"

"That doesn't make the smallest difference. We aren't fighting for slavery, but for the right of self-government, for the right of each State to regulate its domestic affairs in its own way. If we were fighting for slavery I should be on the other side, as you very well know. It is not only that I am an abolitionist, as Thomas Jefferson and Chancellor Wythe were, but I was elected Governor of Virginia

solely because of my anti-slavery views. You remember that in the campaign between Goggin and me, the one strongest plea made against me was that I had condemned slavery as an institution destructive of the young manhood of the South; that I had proposed and advocated the division of Virginia into two States so that the western half of it at least might be rescued from the curse of slavery; you remember that this plea was so effectually used against me in the black belt that, although the State was normally Democratic and I was the Democratic candidate, the returns during the first day seemed to indicate Goggin's overwhelming election—so much so that in his congratulatory speech Goggin bade his Whig friends adieu, saying: 'I am going home to kiss the next Governor's wife'; you remember that it was the returns from the panhandle region—where abolitionists are as thick as they are in Massachusetts—that turned the scale and elected me.* So in this controversy it matters not what any man's views of slavery may be. There is a larger question of liberty involved, and it is for that that we are fighting. And in my judgment, it is the one redeeming circumstance connected with the war upon which we are entering, that whatever its

*These are facts of history.—AUTHOR.

issue may be, it will carry with it the extinguishment of African slavery. If we fail, and the arbitrament of arms is adverse to us, the North will insist upon abolition as the price we must pay for what the North calls 'rebellion.' If we succeed, we shall bring Canada to our doors, and runaway slaves will have only to cross the Ohio or the Potomac to make their escape secure."

"Damn it," broke in Colonel Warren, "I wish all my negroes had done that long ago."

"So does many another Virginian," answered the Governor. But that is a secondary matter now. We're in for a tremendous fight and we aren't ready for it. Our present business is to get ready. There's a lot of very hard work to do, and I want you to help in doing it."

CHAPTER IV

A WOMAN'S COURAGE

When Agatha received Edgar Burton's letter, she went off to herself to read it. She read it many times. She pondered over it, she wept over it, she chastised her soul because of it, and she suffered agonies of conscience in its behalf.

The trouble was that Agatha Warren loved Edgar Burton. The fact became clear to her as she read and reread that letter. She knew now, as she had not known before, that there was something in this man which appealed to her as nothing in any other man had ever done. She resisted the conviction, but it forced itself upon her. She fought against it, but it conquered her. She argued the matter with herself, adducing the most convincing reasons, but she was not convinced.

She told herself that this man was the enemy of Virginia—the only country she knew. She argued with herself that he should therefore be her enemy and she his. It was all to

no purpose. She loved Edgar Burton and she could not hide the fact from her own eyes, try as she might to do so.

This very letter, which so awakened her love for the man whose suit she had rejected upon principle, emphasized the fact of his potential enmity to her land and her people. In it he frankly declared his purpose, if called upon, to join—however reluctantly—in the war upon Virginia, upon her father, her brother—all who were dear to her. Why should she not resent this as the worst possible affront to herself? Why should she still cherish a tender recollection of this man, her enemy?

And yet it was this very letter that had awakened her love and revealed it to herself. There was something in it that was irresistible—something of manliness and courage that appealed to her as nothing else had ever done.

Agatha Warren was a Virginia woman, bred in that school of loyalty which made of duty the supreme consideration in life. She was accustomed to leave all questions of final, definitive decision to the superior judgment of her masculine relatives. They were right; of needs they must be, and only unwomanliness could so much as question their decisions. She was resolute in her determination not to question them. And yet, she loved this man who

not only questioned but openly antagonized them. In spite of herself, she was in sympathy with him.

If she could have sent him an answer to his letter, she would have told him bravely that she could not accept the love of one who was the enemy of her country and her people. But mail intercourse was now at an end between the North and the South and so she could not send him an answer.

The only thing she could do was to go on loving him in spite of herself and concealing from those about her a state of mind which she refused even to recognize as existent within herself. She busied herself scraping lint and trying to convince herself that she did not love this man because, in the nature of the case, she must not.

Here again was the tragedy of civil war illustrated cruelly. Here again was one who suffered under the scorpion-lash of a divided duty, with love as the sacrifice.

Agatha made no complaint. She was too proud in her young womanhood for that. But more than that, she resolutely refused to fall into melancholy or to let any shadow on her own countenance cast shade upon the lives of those about her. Bravely, with a courage that no man under arms is called upon to manifest,

she went about her duties with a smiling face and a demeanor joyous enough to win those others from their contemplation of the sorrows of that time.

Now that her father and her brother were gone, it fell to her to direct the plantation work, and she did it so well that Phil, the "head man," ventured the prediction of heavier crops under the management of "Little Miss" than "any ole master ever made." She had a winning way with her that secured a more loyal service than the exercise of authority could have done. The negroes admired and loved their "little Miss," and they worked for her with a will that mere orders could never have secured. The older among them, those of established character, made themselves her efficient lieutenants, too, and the merciless agents of the authority she herself did not undertake to wield. If any young rapscallion among them shirked his work Uncle Joe "gave him a talking to" that wrought a speedy reform, the more speedy because Uncle Joe was known to regard "a good gadding"—such as Colonel Warren never sanctioned—in the light of an occasional therapeutic necessity for young negroes, disposed to presume upon the absence of the master of the plantation. If any stable hand slighted the work of curry-

ing his mules, the great, stalwart head man Phil was apt to give him so bad a quarter of an hour in the stable that he had to limp and rub his bruised person throughout the next day.

Agatha was quick to see that food crops rather than tobacco were the needs of the time. She did not hesitate to divert energy from the tobacco to the corn when it was necessary to make a choice, and—mere girl that she was—she instituted a new industry on the plantation in recognition of the actual and probable needs of the time of distress. From sixty to seventy-five cows were daily milked upon the plantation, and the greater part of their milk habitually went to waste. Agatha stopped that. There had always been a little cheese, made on the premises for domestic consumption, so that the processes of cheese making were known there. She had somewhere read the statement that, pound for pound, cheese had almost as great a food value as meat, and, realizing as she did the great food necessity that must soon fall upon Virginia, she arranged to convert every pint of waste milk into what she called "good ration stuff." She foresaw that if the war should endure for long, the cows that yielded the milk must after a while be killed for beef, "but while

they live and give milk," she said, "I'm going to make them the most useful food producers I can."

In the same spirit she cherished all the other waste products of the plantation. She kept her household force busy converting perishable fruits into food stuffs that would keep. She toiled hard with all her seamstresses, making clothes for the soldiers, and the fleeces from the flock of sheep that still wandered over the hill pasture were converted, under her direction, into blankets for soldiers' use and comfort.

Then, too, she had Bob and Betty on her hands, to educate, to amuse, and to make happy.

Altogether she was too busy a young woman to fall into brooding melancholy.

"My duty is plain and I will do it with all my might. My work is marked out for me, and I will do it." To these resolutions she added another: "There is need of cheer in this house, and my face shall furnish it."

And it did, from beginning to end.

CHAPTER V

SAPPHO'S ADMINISTRATIVE PERPLEXITIES

Sappho owned the Warren place and its people. That is to say, Sappho had been Mammy to everybody "born and raised" there for more than a generation, and if there is anywhere on earth an authority so undisputed and so far beyond the possibility of dispute as that of the colored mammy in an old Virginia family was, the records of such things kept among men make no mention of it.

Sappho's was a kindly despotism—more than that, it was a devotedly loving one—but it was none the less a despotism.

She was herself in perfect health always. She had never known an ache or a pain in all her life—a fact which she confidentally attributed to corn bread and buttermilk—and she seemed no day older and in no way less strong than she had seemed when little John William Warren—Colonel Warren now—was a child in pinafores. She was accustomed to boast that "the Warrens is a 'durable' family,"

and lightnings and cataclysms could not have persuaded her that she was not a Warren and the inheritor of all the virtues, privileges, and immunities of that ancient family, including her boasted privileges of unfailingly perfect health. A logical caviller might have argued that, as the Warrens were white and Sappho an unmitigated black, she could not be supposed to have inherited the physical or mental peculiarities of the Warrens. Such cavilling would have made no more impression upon Sappho's mind than the cackling of a hen might. What was logic to Sappho? What were facts to her when they refused to fit in with her thinking? Supported as she was by the traditions of a hereditary aristocracy, she brushed such things aside as jauntily as she disregarded the instructions of the doctors when she had a patient to look after.

For, while Sappho knew nothing of pain or illness by reason of any personal experience, she was none the less exigent and imperative in the treatment of such maladies as others under her governance might encounter. If Bob got a bee-sting in the course of his ill-directed nature studies, Mr. Bob had to go to bed and stay there until every trace of swelling had yielded to Sappho's applications of opedeldoc. It may be recorded,

merely as a matter of information, that Bob, who strenuously objected to bed on general boyish principle, and who held every hour spent in bed to be an hour robbed from the sum total of possible human enjoyment, quickly learned to conceal his bee-stings and other mishaps from the knowledge of his tyrant. In the same way Agatha had long ago learned to say nothing about a sore throat, lest she be immured in bed and drenched with sage tea and other abominations.

But now that Agatha had the plantation to manage, she found it difficult to conceal from Sappho's lovingly searching scrutiny the utter weariness with which she sometimes returned to the great house after her day's work in superintending the agricultural operations. And when to all this was added the necessity that often fell upon the young mistress of sitting up for half the night or even for all the night with some one of the negroes who had fallen ill, Sappho's authority was subjected to a strain that would have overthrown any dynasty less firmly established than hers. After the manner of other despots who encounter a recalcitrancy beyond control, Sappho solved her grave problem of state by recognizing Agatha as an unruly force that must be permitted to have its way, as safety valves must.

But while Sappho continued to reign at Warren House the life there was utterly changed. All the able-bodied men in the community had enlisted and had gone away a-soldiering. Where there had been gay gatherings of belles and beaux, "with music to fill up the pauses," there were now only forlorn groups of unattended girls without even a man near enough to talk about. Sappho contemptuously called such Adamless Edens "hen parties."

In still other ways the life at Warren House was changed. All the riding horses that had aught of mettle in them had been withdrawn from the stables and sent into the cavalry service, so that—to Sappho's unutterable disgust—Miss Agatha had to take her morning rides on the back of what Sappho called "an inconsequent and upliverous mule." What Sappho thought the word "inconsequent" meant, or what significance she attached to the word form "upliverous," this present chronicler has no means of finding out. But it was Sappho's habit, when indulging in impassioned utterance, to leave much to imagination and conjecture.

Another thing that mightily troubled Sappho as the war went on was Bob's development and Betty's imitative growth in grace—or dis-

grace as Sappho reckoned it. Until war came Bob had been content to sit upon the river bank and angle for minnows while his father or his brother more ambitiously threshed the stream for big rock fish—striped bass they are called farther North. But now that the older fishermen were gone away Bob was seized with an ambition to take their places. After several abortive efforts he came in one day proudly bearing an eight-pound rock fish, a broken fishing rod, and a suit of juvenile clothing so far saturated with water and plastered over with mud that only an abiding faith in the achievement of the impossible could suggest a hope of reparation.

But the physical side of the matter was as nothing in comparison with the psychological side of it. Physically Sappho might deal with mud and wet, and by putting Bob upon a regimen of tansy and pepper tea she might hope to avert the "pee neumonia" whose advent she feared. "But what is ole Sappho to do," she asked in despair, "with a boy that's been an' gone an' cotched a eight-poun' fish? Why dat chile'll jes' live in de river now, an' dat recklesome little Betty's boun' to jine him in his wickedness. Miss Betty, you'se two year older'n Bob, an' you oughter be a gardeen angel to him. Stid o' that, you'se jes' what de

lawyers calls a participatin' criminus wid him, an' ole Sappho's jes' got to b'ar it all."

"Oh, mammy, you just ought to have seen Bob play him!" exclaimed the girl.

"Dar 'tis!" said Sappho, in disgusted despair. "Tain't no sort o' use a tryin' to reg'late childern in dese here upheavin' an' disgruntled war times. I jes' wish dem Yankees had to manage some precious chiles lik' ole Sappho has got to do!"

CHAPTER VI

THE WAR GAME'S PROGRESS

It is not intended in the telling of this story to write any history of the Civil War or to follow the course of its events, except so far as these influenced the action of the story itself.

During the first summer the war consisted of picknicking on an elaborate scale, varied by considerable incidental slaughter. One battle was fought, the one at Bull Run, in description of which enough ink has been spilled to drown all the men who participated in it. After it was over, the ex-captains who had come into command of great armies on both sides, took a long resting spell, with a view probably to studying up their parts and finding out what real generals were expected to do with armies when they were set to command them.

In the meanwhile there was a good deal of activity on the outer lines, where men like Colonel Warren on one side and Griffin, a colonel now on the other, were doing their best to

make soldiers out of the volunteers under their command, by practising them in fight.

These two old friends had especially frequent opportunities of meeting each other—with more or less of distance between—chiefly because both were old soldiers, restlessly given to activity, and accustomed to see the humor of a desultory contest of the kind they were carrying on. They used to assail each other's quarters and leave laughing notes of a saucy sort for each other. Now and then they met in sterner fashion and left some dead men stretched upon the northern Virginian fields. But they were engaged in war, and what would you have? Surely Prince Bismarck was right when, ten years later, he cynically observed that "one cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs." The men who fell were the eggs broken in the process of omelet making. Their broken-hearted widows and their desolate orphans—what of them? Well, the names of these women and children were not on the muster rolls, and war takes no account of those not included in the official reckoning of effective force.

With the opening of the next year, after long and impatient waiting, McClellan set to work to make an end of the nonsense of rebellion.

Having organized the greatest army this modern world of ours had ever seen, and having equipped it as no other army on earth had ever been equipped before, he moved it to the mouth of the James River and thence up to the very gates of Richmond, throwing up his earthworks so close to the Confederate capital indeed that his sentinels, as they walked their beats, could see the spires and count the strokes of the bells that summoned their enemies to church.

It was fully understood that McClellan was presently to push his way into Richmond and make an end of the war in time for the men on either side to return to their homes and attend to their Spring planting.

But one thing after another interfered, and presently something happened. Robert E. Lee took command of the Confederate forces, and the war began in earnest. Bringing Stonewall Jackson down from the valley, he suddenly assailed McClellan's flank and rear, and after seven days of such fighting as had never before been seen on this continent, he had McClellan penned up at Harrison's Landing, standing on the defensive and no longer thinking of Richmond as his objective.

Then began the grand strategy of the Civil War. In aid of McClellan's siege, and by

way of rendering its effectiveness dramatically complete, another army was marching down from Washington by way of Manassas Junction, to fall upon Lee's left wing and crush it. But, with McClellan huddling at Harrison's Landing, the programme of help to his army in its intended completion of conquest was necessarily at an end.

Lee had successfully dealt with one army threatening Richmond. His problem now was to deal with another.

McClellan's overwhelming force on the James River was still a menace which Lee dared not ignore. If he should remove his own army to northern Virginia, there to meet another oncoming force, there would be nothing to prevent McClellan from making a new and successful advance upon Richmond.

Accordingly, Lee moved cautiously, transferring one corps at a time to northern Virginia, and so disposing of them as to make his advance in that direction a threat to Washington itself.

That which he intended to happen, happened in fact. One after another of McClellan's corps was withdrawn by water to Washington for the protection of the capital city.

Then Lee found himself free to assail Pope at Manassas with his whole force, and he did

so with results disastrous to the Federal army. Then instantly Lee ordered an advance into Maryland and Pennsylvania, by way of transferring the seat of war from Southern to Northern soil.

It was about this time—a month after the battle of Antietam—that Edgar Burton made up his mind to enlist. The North had at last begun to take the war seriously, and to understand that its end was to come only after long, dogged and desperate fighting.

Burton enrolled his name in a company formed in his native town. It consisted mainly of boys, but there were enough young politicians in it to take all the commissioned offices to themselves. The time had come when certain thrifty types of men, going into the war, looked out for themselves. One of these made himself captain, and the others were predestined lieutenants, without the smallest reference to their capacity. Burton was in all respects of fitness their superior, but the best they saw fit to do for him was to make him a sergeant, and as such he went to the fighting front, neither asking nor caring what was to become of him.

At Fredericksburg, in that terrific series of charges against Hell which has made the heroism of that hillside famous, Ned Burton so

far distinguished himself that as soon as he got over his wounds he was made a lieutenant, with a single bar on his shoulder strap.

But "old Bill Griffin" was one of the fighters on that bloody field of grass, and, in his report of what he observed on that occasion he ventured the emphatic rhetorical pronouncement that "It will be a damned shame to let that fellow off with a junior lieutenancy." In response to his profanity, Burton was presently made a first lieutenant and assigned to staff service under Griffin's own command.

It was just after that battle that Griffin, a general officer now, was called upon to give testimony before a court-martial with respect to the conduct of an officer of high rank, who had fallen under the implication of "cowardice in front of the enemy." When Griffin was asked if he had seen the accused officer in action, he had responded "Yes." He was next asked:

"From what you saw of his conduct, General, should you regard him as a coward?"

"No, I should say not. I should say, rather, that he is a brave man, but *altogether too nervous for war.*"

On the strength of this testimony, coming as it did from an officer whose own courage was

a by-word, the accused man was not cashiered. He was wisely ordered, instead, to some bureau service where his courage might be utilized, while his nervousness was not subjected to overstrain.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

General Griffin was not an over-patient person at best. He was very much in earnest in his war work, as he was apt to be in everything else, and when things did not seem to him to be going as they should, he was full to the lips of "swear words," some of which—a good many, indeed—were apt to leak out beyond the portals of utterance.

At Chancellorsville something of the kind happened frequently—so frequently that the chaplain of General Griffin's division presently felt it necessary, in defense of his spiritual nature, to withdraw himself from the tempest of picturesque vituperation and retire to a camp fire by one of the fords, where a cooking detail possessed its half dozen inconsequent souls in safe, culinary patience.

When Griffin learned that his commander-in-chief, after gaining that position in the open and on Lee's flank for which his entire movement had been a brilliant preparation, had

withdrawn from the position thus gained, his profanity broke out anew, as did that of many other earnest officers who had grasped the military meaning of the movement.

But it was not until Jackson began his march around the right wing of the Federal army, threatening it with the destruction that presently overtook it, that Griffin's command of vituperative language had full manifestation. Then his swearing became eloquent, his profanity something that could be parsed.

It was then that he ordered Burton to take a detail into the woods, to find out what was going on there.

Burton, whose conception of war was drawn from Buckholtz's dictum that "war means fight," put up a fight against the troopers who first invaded his solitude, and, as a result, the first thing Lieutenant Burton knew he was a prisoner in the hands of a hustling squad of Stuart's cavalrymen, who seemed in an extraordinary hurry to pass him over to other men in their rear, so that they might themselves the more quickly rejoin their fighting friends in front.

It seemed to Burton that he and the men who had been captured with him were impelled toward the Confederate rear with a propulsive force the like of which he had never

encountered before. His captors were Stuart's mamelukes, and these, in their eagerness to lose as little as possible of what they called "the fun in front," were almost uncivil in their haste to turn him over to men in rear and forget all about him. For Stuart's cavaliers were war-seasoned veterans now, and they had learned their lessons so well that they understood the present situation as thoroughly as any of their commanding generals could. They saw clearly that General Hooker, after achieving a brilliant triumph of strategy, had given up all its advantages by putting himself in a defensive attitude. They saw that Lee, with less than half as great a force, had made himself master of the situation by taking the offensive and dividing his army in presence of an enemy. They saw that Jackson, with his "foot cavalry," was moving like a cyclone around the Federal right wing, and they foresaw that he would presently fall like a hurricane upon that unsuspecting wing and roll it up like a scroll. These rollicking old troopers of Stuart's were unwilling to miss any part of the superbly dramatic performance they anticipated, and so it happened that within the course of an hour or two Lieutenant Edgar Burton, a prisoner, was rapidly rushed to the enemy's rear, hurriedly transferred from one

squad to another, and left, at nightfall, in company with a multitude of other disarmed men in blue, in a lonely, and otherwise uninteresting stretch of Virginia red mud, which was dignified by the name of somebody's road.

In the rush and hurry Burton had lost all sense of direction, so that when the company of captives were set marching under guard at daylight, he seemed to himself to be traversing again the road over which he had come. His mistake was corrected when, in the early morning, the Confederates, half drunk with unexpected victory, renewed the tremendous, resistless rush over Hooker's broken and disorganized lines.

The roar of battle in rear told the young man in what direction he was being carried, and when nightfall came again he learned, almost without being told, how completely and disastrously Hooker's brilliantly planned campaign of Chancellorsville had been brought to naught.

He asked no questions of his captors. It was not necessary. The news that came to them was so glad in its significance to their ears that they talked of it incessantly among themselves. He had only to listen as the now very slow march of the prisoners to the rear continued in order to learn that Hooker, in command of

what he had called "the finest army on the planet," had been baffled, beaten, and so nearly destroyed that he was hurriedly taking refuge beyond the river he had so gallantly forced his way across.

A little later, Burton learned that Lee, flushed with victory, was again pushing his columns northward, that the Potomac was again to be crossed, that Washington itself was threatened anew, and that those who had charge of him and his fellow captives were swearingly impatient to complete their unwelcome service and return to their commands, where they might hope to have their share in the work yet to be done.

The news that so mightily gladdened his captors, depressed Edgar Burton beyond measure. It meant to him an utter disappointment of hope. He had confidently reckoned upon Hooker's movement as one destined to make a speedy end of the war and bring to the land that abiding peace which he looked forward to as the one worthy object and purpose of war.

All the high hopes he had cherished were blasted in their beginning. The "finest army on the planet" was beaten and broken, and the war was on again with greater uncertainty than ever as to its outcome, with Lee left free

to plan it as he pleased, with Washington on the defensive instead of Richmond, and with no commander within sight for the Army of the Potomac who could be reckoned upon as a fair match in strategy or fighting force for Lee.

The trouble with Edgar Burton was that he had a habit of thinking—a dangerous and disabling habit in a soldier.

Another trouble was that he had a hole through his left arm and the fleshy tissues of the back.

Some enterprising person at the North had imported a few dozen English Whitworth rifles for the use of sharpshooters. These were guns of exceedingly long range and extraordinary accuracy, fitted with telescopic sights, and carrying a bullet of slender form, about an inch and a quarter in length.

By the fortune of war, certain of these searching rifles had been captured by the Confederates, and Stuart had armed a little group of his own sharpshooters with them. In the melee in which Burton had been captured, his shoulder had somehow managed to get itself into the trajectory of one of these absurdly small and ridiculously long bullets. He had felt the impact. It had seemed to him like a rough schoolboy blow upon the arm below the

shoulder—disturbing but not painful. He had gone on with his fighting, thinking no more of the matter until an hour or so after his capture. By that time his shoulder had become painful, and his underclothing seemed glutinously wet to the touch. But there was neither time nor opportunity for consideration. Under hurry of his guards it was on, on, on, until late at night a halt was made at a little railroad junction where the prisoners were to be divided into three groups and sent to three different destinations. Those who were unhurt must go to Richmond and thence to Belle Isle or some other prison camp. Those who were slightly wounded must have their wounds attended to before being sent further South for safe keeping. Those whose wounds were more serious were to be taken by a hospital train to Lynchburg, and thence distributed to a number of small camps in the country where there were doctors enough to care for them properly—or as nearly properly as was possible under conditions then existing, when the savagery of war classed medicines and merciful appliances of surgery with gunpowder as contraband of war, which must not be permitted to pass the lines or fall into the hands of the enemy, even though that enemy might have scores of wounded men from the other

side to care for, and might be forced to let these men die needlessly, for lack of the medicines and appliances that war forbade them to get. Such was the savage rule of war then. It has been slightly ameliorated since, but only slightly.

It had been Edgar Burton's intention to say nothing whatever of his wound, but to permit himself to be classed among the sound men for shipment to an ordinary military prison. But little by little his wound got the better of him —or perhaps the phrase should be, the worse of him—and about the time the camp was made for the separation of the prisoners into classes, he was assailed by another enemy—the deadly malaria of the region in which he had been serving for weeks past.

Suddenly a rigor seized him. He shook like the victim of a holy terror, and he could in nowise control the nervous spasm that tortured him. His teeth chattered as with severe cold, while burning flushes of oncoming fever passed in waves, as it were, over his person. His head ached intensely and seemed swelled as with a resistless effervescence. Every muscle in his body was in torture and all capacity of thinking was utterly gone out of him.

He was conscious only of a friendly caressing voice which said:

"Why, Ned Burton, I'm sorry to see you in so bad a shape. I'll do the best for you that the exigencies of war will allow."

The voice sounded to his dull ears like that of Charley Pelham, who had so tenderly dressed the wound inflicted upon him by the hounds. But he could not be certain of that or of anything. He wanted to sleep. Nothing else mattered.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SAVAGERY OF WAR

It was the business of Charles Pelham, M.D., Major, Surgeon, and Acting Assistant Surgeon-General, to examine the prisoners brought in from the front, to classify them, to assign each to the prison or hospital to which he belonged, and to dress all wounds that needed attention, or to direct the assistant surgeons under his command in the doing of that work.

In the main his work was of a routine, perfunctory character. The great majority of the prisoners were body whole, needing no attention. These he quickly dismissed from his care, turning them over to their proper military custodians. Others were slightly ill or slightly wounded. His assistants quickly disposed of these. But there were, in every company of captured men, a few whose need of the surgeon's attention was great and pressing, the more so, usually because of the delay in receiving it.

Edgar Burton was one of these and one of the worst of them. For thirty hours or more his wound had been neglected, though from the beginning it had been a bad one, especially in need of attention. In exploring it Pelham found that several bits of the wounded officer's uniform had been carried into the wound and had lodged there. He found no great blood vessels pierced and no bones broken. But he found the tissues badly lacerated by the very long and rapidly spinning missile. On the whole the young surgeon was tempted to describe the wound as a "nasty" one—a word which Virginians rarely used and always with apologies for its offensiveness.

When Burton came out of the fever following his chill, the young doctor said to him:

"What an idiot you are, Ned, anyhow! Why didn't you report yourself wounded when they captured you? They'd have put you into a field hospital at once, and I should have been spared the very troublesome job of saving your life."

"I'm not sure it is worth saving, Charley. But, anyhow, I really didn't know I was wounded, and I don't understand it even now. I felt a blow on my arm and shoulder. I thought somebody had hit me with the butt of a musket. But I never dreamed a bullet had

struck me till I felt the blood, long afterward."

For three days there was a fight for a human life there under a brush shelter by the railroad track. For a time the issue was a very doubtful one, but at the end of the three days Charley Pelham accounted himself the winner. Ned Burton's wound was yielding to treatment; his malarial attack was under control.

"The problem now is what to do with you, Ned," he said one morning after finding the conditions gratifying. "Of course, there wouldn't be any problem at all, if war were really civilized, as it is not. In that case I should have full authority to send you home in order that you might breathe your native Lake George air and get well with the least possible trouble to the doctors."

"Well, but I'm a prisoner of war."

"Yes, and, damn it! that's just what I'm complaining of. I don't know that I am more humane of disposition than are the men who have framed the so-called laws of civilized war, but at any rate I'm more logical, more consistent, more—well, more common-sensible. Now, consider the matter a little. When the red Indian wins a fight he proceeds to brain and scalp all the wounded. We don't do that, because we call ourselves civilized. We hold to the theory that the only legitimate purpose of

military operations is to accomplish military ends, and that when these are accomplished all excuse for antagonism ceases. In pursuit of that idea, we regard a man wounded as a man out of the fight and we make no further war on him. The Confederate or the Federal soldier who should be caught plundering the wounded would be strung up to the nearest tree by his comrades as a monster of inhumanity. The soldier who wouldn't surrender his canteen to slake the thirst of a wounded enemy is not to be found by Diogenes's lantern in either army. So far we are beginning to be civilized. But if you inquire a little further you'll find that we are still savages all. When we capture a lot of wounded men—that is to say, when a lot of wounded men fall into our hands—we make prisoners of them precisely as if they were still integral parts of our enemy's fighting force, as they clearly are not.

"What we ought to do after every battle is clear enough to every humane mind. We ought to gather in the wounded, tenderly dress their injuries, and then, as soon as the fight is ended, we ought to turn them over to the surgeons of their own army, so that they may be sent to their homes to recover.

"You laymen often think of us surgeons as hard-hearted brutes, because, in our endeavor

to learn all we can by way of equipping ourselves for the work of saving life and ameliorating suffering, we have no hesitation in dissecting cadavers. Let me tell you, you misjudge us. It is the fundamental, basilar, fecundative idea of all surgery and all medicine to find out how to stay human suffering and save human life. To that end surgeons have made subjects of themselves and doctors have voluntarily submitted themselves to dangerous, distressing and loathesome disease, in the hope of enabling their fellows to save other human beings from like suffering and danger."

"My dear boy, I know all that, and it is not without honor in the country of my mind. But why do you emphasize it? Why do you plead for it? Why do you think it necessary to justify your professional attitude to the minds of men?"

"Why, because we surgeons are the sufferers by the inhumanity of war—the sufferers by sympathy at least—and we are daily and hourly reminded of it. For example. I found you in terrible need of quinine. I gave you the very little I had. In doing so, I robbed some other poor fellow of that which might have saved his life. I have saved your life at the expense of his, and there is absolutely no

reason of common sense impelling me to such a cruel choice. The laboratories of New York and Philadelphia are full of quinine. England and France and Germany have abundant supplies of the drug. But the blockade—which makes no distinction between a beneficent remedy for human ills and the 'villainous saltpetre' that ministers to the destruction of human life—forbids the importation of quinine from abroad. If a compassionate woman, passing from the North to the South under any form of safe conduct, attempts to bring through a few bottles of the all-merciful drug, she is arrested and sent to prison for her pains, and many a Northern soldier like yourself rots in a Southern grave because of the deprivation of that great, life-saving agency. Mind you, I am not blaming your people more than my own. I am blaming only that barbarity of war which needlessly increases the number of the dead and cruelly adds to the suffering incident to war. I am equally hostile to the war rule that compels me to send you to a hospital camp as a prisoner, instead of sending you to Lake George to get well under care of your friends, and to the similar cruelty which deprives me of the quinine I need with which to combat the poisonous miasms of our swamps that have saturated your system. Un-

der the uncivilized conditions that govern us, instead of sending you to Lake George to get well, I must send you to a camp on the upper Appomattox River, to languish under utterly inadequate treatment. I have given you the very last grain of quinine I have. The surgeons whither I am sending you have no quinine at all. They are using in its stead a decoction of dogwood root bark, which Sam Lamkin, the greatest chemist and one of the best fellows we have, is making as a sort of despairing substitute for a drug that abounds at the North and that we should have in abundance, but for the stupid, insensate, idiotic, murderous inhumanity of the rules that govern what they call 'civilized war.'"

Charley Pelham was a hot-blooded Virginian, accustomed to hold his opinions strongly and to express them with vehemence. But Edgar Burton, cool-blooded man of the North that he was, found much with which to sympathize in his friend's impassioned arraignment of civilized war for its barbarous cruelty.

Practically, however, neither could do anything for the amelioration of the cruel conditions that existed. There was nothing for Charley Pelham to do but order his friend sent to a hospital camp as a wounded prisoner of war, and there was no course open to Ned Bur-

ton but to submit. Pelham traveled with his friend for a part of the journey "to see how he bore the jolting of the train," and then the friends parted quite as if there had been no war between them, quite as if the one had not been an officer of the Confederate army and the other a wounded prisoner under military guard.

So goes war. So are the fictions of civilization maintained while organized, planned and deliberately executed slaughter goes on in the name of glory.

CHAPTER IX

THE PLIGHT OF THE VIRGINIANS

"Ordinarily, old fellow, I should send you to my own home, or better still, to Warren House, for your convalescence. But under existing circumstances—"

"Under existing circumstances I am a prisoner of war—an enemy of the Virginia that I love with all my heart. Besides, it would be painful to everybody concerned—"

"I understand. And it is better so, perhaps. I'm going to send you to a camp not far from Warren House, and sometimes the ladies at Warren House send dainties to the camp. That doesn't happen so often now, because the dainties are growing scarce, and because of something else."

"What is the something else, Charley?" asked Burton, solicitously.

"Well, you see, when the Seven Days' Fights around Richmond occurred, there were more wounded men than all the hospitals could provide for. So an appeal was issued to all the

planters of Virginia to come to the rescue by opening their houses to such of the wounded as could be cared for there, and they all responded, generously. Warren House is a hospital and its resources are taxed to the utmost. There isn't a hog or a sheep or a steer left alive on the plantation, where the cattle upon a thousand hills seemed once to wander in comfortable assurance of plenty. Even the turkey roosts have been robbed of their gobblers. The chickens have all been eaten up, and it is rumored that some of the fattest of the mules have been sacrificed to furnish army rations."

"But what do the women and children there live upon—Mrs. Warren, Agatha, and the rest?"

"God only knows. I tell you, Ned, our people are starving in order that their armies may be fed. They mean this war for all it is worth. They are fighting for their homes. They regard their enemies as invaders. They are no longer discussing the questions upon which the war began. With them it is now solely the issue of endurance or submission. To you of the North the war may be this or that or the other of theoretical hair-splitting; to us of the South the war is one of cruel, brutal, utterly unjustifiable conquest by a physically superior

power, which it is our duty to resist by every energy we have, every capacity of fight, every heroism of endurance, every self-sacrifice, every heroic immolation of self that may be possible to us. There are daintily nourished women in the South who are living to-day upon greens gathered from the pasture lands rather than eat aught that might nourish a soldier and strengthen his arm for a fight. There are little children subsisting upon waste, and gladly so subsisting, in order that their brothers in the field may not falter for lack of food. There are old men serving in our ranks, who should be nursing their infirmities at home. There are boys of fourteen or fifteen carrying muskets who ought to be learning paradigms instead. In brief, this land of ours, in behalf of what it believes to be its right of self-government, is putting forth its utmost endeavors, exhausting its resources, and sacrificing its manhood and its womanhood and its childhood in desperate determination not to be beaten. I know the thing is not thus understood at the North, where no such sacrifice is called for. I know that there men do not understand. I know that there politics means more than policy. I know that there—ah, bah! What is the use of arguing. I have told you the facts. They are more eloquent than

anything I can say about them. I must bid you farewell now. You will go to a camp where such slender means as we have left to us will be brought to bear for your benefit. I can do nothing more. I think your war upon us is utterly wrong and unjustifiable. But we make no complaint of that. Some day our attitude will be understood even at the North. In the meanwhile we will fight the thing out as best we can, and if we fail it will at least be with our manhood unimpeached."

There was no time for Burton to reply. On the whole he was rather glad that it was so. Still firmly convinced as he was that the sentiment of nationality was of greater consequence than the idea of local self-government, he could admit neither his friend's premises nor his conclusions. But his soul was saddened by the revelation made to him of the suffering the Virginians were enduring.

CHAPTER X

BY THE SYCAMORE SPRING

The camp to which Ned Burton was sent lay in among the hills not far from the upper James River, on its Southern side. There was as much of comfort there, for wounded prisoners, as the circumstances permitted the Southern authorities to provide. The diet was meagre in amount and not very good in quality. The country was exhausted of fit food supplies. The huts were rude hovels of pine logs, but in that climate, in Summer time at least, nothing better in the way of housing was needed, and, on the whole, the convalescent prisoners were as comfortable and as happy as convalescent prisoners could expect to be anywhere, in the enemy's country.

Warren House was not many miles away, and Ned Burton knew the fact. But he made no effort to open communication with his friends there—his enemies now by his own choice, he felt and believed. He was a proud man, conscious of his own integrity, and it

seemed to him that to seek intercourse with Warren House would be to humiliate himself, to surrender something of principle, to recognize himself as in the wrong, where he confidently believed himself to be in the right.

So he suffered and was strong.

At last, one day, there came a disturbance. A great Federal raiding party swept up the Valley of Virginia and over the mountains into the Piedmont region, where the convalescents' camp lay.

A sharp fight occurred not far from the camp, and with the instinct of the soldier strong upon him, Ned Burton seized a gun from the nearest guard, rallied such of the wounded men as were fit to take part, and joined in the little battle.

In doing so, of course, he violated what amounted to a parole. At the least he gave up his rights and privileges as a wounded prisoner of war and became again a combatant in arms.

The raiding party succeeded in breaking up the convalescent camp, carrying away a few of the prisoners and killing several of those who were in the worst condition. That was the way in which military operations often resulted.

At the end of the melee, Ned Burton found himself in the woods, without any fresh wound, but with the old one in worse condition than it had been for a month past. He was in a peculiarly embarrassing position. Having revolted against the hospital authorities, he had no further claim upon them. Having seized a gun from one of his guards, and having used it offensively against the rest, it was clearly not his privilege to return to his hospital hut and expect attention there.

When morning came, after a tiresome night, he was alone in the woods. He was enfeebled by his old wounds and additionally worn out by a night of exposure and hard traveling. He had no food, but, fortunately for the present, he was not excessively hungry. He crawled with difficulty to a little stream—half brook, half creek—that came tumbling down a hill and emptied itself into a pool at the foot of a great, gnarled sycamore tree, whence, having reached a lower level, it quickly pursued its way to the Appomattox River beyond. He recognized the spot. He could not have failed to do so in view of its peculiar features and especially in view of the twisted and picturesque asymmetry of the great sycamore. It was a spot in which he had often lingered in converse with Agatha Warren. He remem-

bered how she had sat at the root of the great tree, picking wild flowers to pieces and telling him about them with a wealth of botanical lore which was at once his envy and his despair. He remembered how on one occasion he had helped her to climb up into the great crotch of the tree, and how, looking thence to the north, she had commented upon the features of the landscape beyond.

He was hungry now, for three hours had passed, and he hungrily remembered the dainty sandwiches they two had eaten there by the root of the tree. He remembered how fascinating her personality had seemed to him in the half childlike, half womanly innocence that characterized her in that far time. He remembered all the words of gentleness she had spoken to him then, the transparent purity of her young woman's soul, her love and loyalty to her people, her brave attitude of confiding obedience—and all the rest of her loveliness. He reflected with bitterness that he was her enemy now, the enemy of her people, the antagonist of all whom she loved, and, as such, necessarily her foe.

It was a bitter thought, and he hugged it because of its very bitterness. It meant to him that he was a man now—a soldier—and not merely a lover. It reminded him that in

going into the war he had obeyed his convictions, doing the right as he understood it, and not suffering soft desire to lure him from its doing.

"It is precisely that," he reflected, "that reconciles me to everything—that which justifies everything. It was from Agatha and her people that I learned the supreme lesson of my manhood. It was they who taught me that duty is superior to inclination; that loyalty to the right, as one understands it, is the all-dominant obligation of a human soul; that to do one's duty without regard to the consequences that may fall on oneself, is the part every man worthy to live in the world must play if he would acquit himself as a man. Surely, even Agatha would approve my course, if she could understand how imperatively a sense of duty has forced itself upon me."

At that moment he heard a sound as of some one leaping down the rocks, and the next instant Bob appeared, bait-box in hand, and searching for crawfish under the stones of the brook's bed.

Bob stood upright and contemplated Burton with astonishment in his eyes and a suggestion of shock in his demeanor.

"Why, it's Mr. Burton!" he exclaimed. "But you're wearing a Yankee uniform."

"Yes, Bob. That's because I'm a Yankee."

"But you're Mr. Burton. You aren't a Yankee."

"Yes I am, Bob. I'm a soldier on the other side. I'm badly wounded, Bob, and I'm very hungry. I wonder if I could—"

"Wait a minute," said the boy. "I've been out since daylight getting crawfish. You see, Mr. Burton, I'm the fisherman of the family now, and we live on fish mainly. I've got a little fire up the branch. I built it to warm my hands by in the early morning. You see, I have to keep my hands in the water so much of the time, turning the stones over and catching the crawfish, that I have to have a fire to warm my fingers by. If I didn't, the crawfish would get away from me and I wouldn't have any bait and couldn't catch any fish for the folks up at the house to eat. If you're hungry, I'll bring some coals down here and start a fire. Then I'll go to my trotlines. Maybe I've hooked a catfish or a flat back. If I have, I'll come back and cook it for you. If I haven't, well, maybe if you're very hungry you might eat a pint of crawfish. They're pretty good, you know, if you're hungry enough to forget that they're bait. Agatha ate some yesterday because the wounded men we've got in the house had eaten up everything else."

"Listen, Bob!" said Burton very earnestly. "Do you mean that you people at Warren House are short of food—that sometimes you haven't enough to eat?"

"Why, of course. It's war time, you know. All our cattle and sheep and hogs were sent to feed the soldiers, and the raiders have carried off pretty much everything else, except greens, and of course they grow themselves. We've eleven wounded men to care for, you know, and most of what we've got goes to feed them. But sometimes I have good luck with my fishing. I'm short of fishhooks just now, but I'm learning how to make 'em. Agatha makes bully lines out o' ravelings from some old silk skirts, and she made a corkin' good one from an old silk apron she had. I caught a rock fish on it three days ago that weighed seven pounds, and I tell you I had a fight to land him."

Burton sat meditating for a time. Then he said, more to himself than to Bob:

"And that is what war means. Damn war!"

"I didn't know you ever swore, Mr. Burton," said Bob in surprise.

"I don't, ordinarily," answered the other, "but sometimes one can't help it, you know."

"Girls do, and so do women."

"Do what, Bob?"

"Why, help it. They don't swear even when things go the worst sort of way."

"I know they don't, Bob. Listen, Bob. Girls and women are better than we are. You and I would never think of being cheerful if we had half as much to bear as Agatha has."

"Of course we wouldn't; but girls can't help being good. They are born that way. But what I want to know is whether I'm to cook my crawfish for you or go and see what I've got on my lines. You see, Mr. Burton, I don't suppose you know anything about fishing down here in Virginia. Well, there are three sorts of it. We go up the streams for brook trout, and there's a lot of fun in that, particularly when a big speckled fellow has sneered at you half a dozen times, twiddling his fingers at your bait—only, of course, a trout hasn't any fingers. You know what I mean. When you have dropped your fly half a dozen times within an inch of his nose and every time he has sort o' laughed at you just as if he was saying 'You don't fool me; that isn't a real fly'—and then you succeed in whiddling the thing over the surface of the water till he says to himself, 'Well, that's a sure enough fly this time,' and makes a running jump at it, and then you have a fight to keep him out o' the weeds—oh,

that's real fishing. If you weren't wounded and— Well, never mind. I was going to tell you. There's silver perch fishing in the mill ponds, and there you use live minnows for bait, but we can't get live minnows any more because the dam broke and they all ran away; so that doesn't count. There's rock-fish fishing. You know what rock fish are. You call 'em striped bass. Well, they run up here and we catch 'em mostly in falls and ripples, where the water's rough. It's hard on lines, but it's fun. Then there's catfish and flat back. Flat back are what you call suckers, and they don't know how to bite very well. But if I put out some trotlines in the evening, baited with worms and crawfish, I'm pretty sure to hook a catfish before morning, and that's what I was thinking about, only I got to talking and forgot. I'm going to see if I haven't a flat back or a catfish on my lines for you to eat. I'll be back in a hurry."

While Bob was gone, Ned Burton cudgeled his brains. He had four twenty-dollar gold pieces in his pocket, for it was not the practise of Confederates to search or rob their prisoners. He had made his plans. Of course he could give himself up and become a prisoner again, but he had no mind to that. He knew in a general way the desolation of northern

Virginia and the ease with which he might buy his way across that no man's land if the strength to travel should come back to him. A dollar in gold, to the people of that region at that time meant more than hundreds of dollars in Confederate bills, the current money of the country. A twenty-dollar gold piece was almost the purchase price of a plantation, and he had four twenty-dollar gold pieces in possession.

While Bob was away, Burton made up his mind that one of his gold pieces would buy his way to the North, as soon as he should be able to travel. He wanted to give the other three to Bob, for the use of the Warren family if by any means he could devise a way of doing so without offense.

There lay the difficulty. When Bob came back with a flat back, cooked it and gave Burton his breakfast, the young Lieutenant reflected:

"If Bob were the son of any farmer up our way, I could give him those three gold pieces, calling them the price of my breakfast, and he would gladly accept them, with a chuckle of delight over the enormity of the price he had got for his fish. But Bob, trained as he has been in the Virginian tradition that a gentleman cannot receive pay

for hospitable entertainment, would throw the coins in my face."

In despair of arranging the matter in any other way, he resolved to take Bob into his confidence in some degree and to lie a little to him, in a good cause. So when he had finished his breakfast of flat back, he said to the boy:

"Bob, I'm an escaped prisoner. You might as well understand that. I'm too badly wounded to do any fighting now, so that it makes no difference to your people if I get back home again, where there's a chance for me to get well. The only real difference it will make is this, that if I surrender myself again your people will have to feed me, while if I get away to the North I'll do all that for myself. Unless you betray me, I'm going to try to get to my own home. You can't blame me for that, can you, Bob?"

"No, of course not, Mr. Burton. I don't see why they shouldn't be glad to let you do that. And, of course, I shan't betray you. I'm a Warren of Virginia, you know."

"Yes—you're a Warren of Virginia, Bob, and I should never ask you to do anything you thought wrong. Now let me tell you, Bob. You know they sometimes parole prisoners, making them promise not to fight again till they are exchanged. Well, suppose you parole me."

At that moment a cavalry squad came over the hill, and Bob said hurriedly:

"Crawl in under the roots of the sycamore, and hide there. Hurry or they'll catch you!"

Burton hurried, and his concealment was just in time. When the cavalry squad rode up, Bob was busy splicing his broken fishlines. Looking up, he called out nonchalantly:

"I say, have any of you fellows got any fishhooks about you?"

"Why, it's Bob Warren!" exclaimed one of the men. "No, Bob; we haven't any fishhooks, but there's a sutler down at our camp that's got some. But he's a sutler, and that means a robber, you know, and his notion of the price of anything he's got to sell is all the money you've got in your pocket and as much more as you're likely to be able to borrow from your friends. I've got one five-dollar bill and you're welcome to it, Bob. Maybe he'll let you have a couple of fishhooks for that."

"No, thank you," said Bob, sturdily. "I'm not borrowing money, but thank you all the same."

"All right, Bob. You're a Warren. But if I pick up a fishhook anywhere I'll send it to you. Give us some crawfish, Bob. I see you've got some and we're pretty hungry this morning."

"Shall I cook 'em?" asked the boy.

"No. We haven't time to wait."

With that the boy emptied his bait can into their eager hands, and half a minute later all the crawfish he had caught were devoured raw by the hungry troopers.

CHAPTER XI

FISHHOOKS AND A "DAMN IT"

Edgar Burton was a man of absolute sincerity of mind. So dominant was this quality, indeed, that during his stay at Warren House he had several times encountered a suspicion of rudeness by his inability to say those little, half sincere, half insincere things that serve as the small change of social intercourse. It seemed to him so natural a thing to blurt out the truth that he had difficulty in avoiding it even when a girl fished for a compliment at his hands.

Now that he was put to it to invent some subterfuge by which to cover up his gift of three twenty-dollar gold pieces to the Warren family, he found his ingenuity in false pretense sadly lacking. It was not only that he could think of no device for Bob's deception—it was still more that he could not reconcile his own honest mind to the thought of deceiving Bob at all. He wondered a little if that suggestion about the sutler might not serve his

purpose, but after a moment's thought he gave it up.

"I am Edgar Burton," he said to himself, "and Bob is Bob—good, honest, innocent Bob. Why should I deceive him at all? Why not be honest and tell the truth? After all, that is what the Warrens of Virginia do, no matter what the circumstances may be. That is what I will do."

Turning to the boy he said:

"Those fellows have eaten up all your bait. Why not go up the branch and get some more while I am writing a note that I want you to deliver?"

Bob assented readily. He had need of the bait, and he was embarrassed in his intercourse with Burton by the reflection that that young man was at once an intimate friend of the Warren family and a soldier in arms against Virginia. It relieved the boy's feelings to go away in search of crawfish.

When he had gone, Burton took out of his pocket all that remained of a notebook. His captors, who had left his gold pieces untouched in his pocket, had carefully torn out of his notebook every sheet that had writing of any kind on it, lest the writing be of a kind to "give aid and comfort to the enemy." But there remained enough blank pages for his

present purpose and on these he wrote a letter to Agatha:

"I do not know," he wrote, "how I should address you, and so I do not address you at all. I ask only that you remember that it is Edgar Burton who writes this.

"Bob has quite unconsciously revealed to me something of the deprivation that this war is inflicting upon you and those dear to you. Please do not blame Bob for this. It was quite unintentional on his part, and if there was any fault in the matter it all belongs to me.

"But the distress to me over the thought that you and those dear to you are suffering deprivation is intolerable. It happens that I have three gold pieces in my pocket—three gold pieces that mean nothing to me, but that may mean something of comfort to you. I am an escaped prisoner, endeavoring to make my way back to the North in order that I may be healed of my wounds. Let me put the case brutally. If I kept these gold pieces somebody, belonging to one side or the other, would soon rob me of them. They cannot possibly remain mine or do me any good. I want them to do you some good. I ask you to accept them in the same spirit in which I accepted your hospitality during the six or eight weeks in which I was a guest at Warren House. If you

refuse to use these little discs of metal as freely as if you had yourself created them out of nothingness, then I shall feel that I am your unacquitted debtor for every hour of the generous hospitality shown to me at Warren House. Please, pray, don't misunderstand me. I am not offering pay for that hospitality. That isn't what I have in mind. I mean only to ask that you will accept and use these gold pieces in the same spirit in which I accepted your hospitality. If you refuse, I swear to you on the honor of a man and a soldier, that when the war is over I will come to Warren House with a check-book in my hand and will say to you: 'We are not friends, but traders; you have furnished me so many meals and so many lodgings, and I claim the right, as an honest trader, to pay for what I have received.'

"Surely, Agatha, you will not put this affront upon me! Surely you will understand. Surely you will take and use these otherwise useless gold pieces in behalf of those whose generous hospitality to me is the one most precious memory of my life. I have none of the grace you Virginians have in the expression of my thought. But this is what I mean: I ask you to use these pieces of metal precisely as I should ask you to sit down to dinner at my mother's table, if you were present

in my home. If you refuse, I shall regard your refusal just as I should if you rejected our invitation to dinner, saying, 'No, I prefer to go to the tavern and pay for what I get.'

"I may or may not live to look into your eyes again, Agatha. If I do, I want to look into them with no accusation in my own. Will you not grant me this?"

He did not sign his communication. There was no need of that. He wrapped the three gold pieces in it and handed it to Bob, saying only:

"Please give that to Agatha, Bob, and please don't say anything more than you must to her about my wounds. I'm getting well now, and I'll easily make my way to the North, where I can get well faster. If I get a chance, I'll send you a lot of fishhooks."

About six weeks later there came to Master Robert Warren, a flag-of-truce-letter from Ned Burton, enclosing a multitude of fishhooks. It bore upon it an endorsement signed by General Griffin and saying: "Never mind about classified contraband of war; these fishhooks are to go through to Bob Warren, orders or no orders. Damn it, the boy is my pet."

General Griffin never could help swearing when he felt like it.

CHAPTER XII

IN A FRAGMENT OF LINEN

Agatha was planning her day's domestic campaign when Bob delivered Ned Burton's letter to her. This daily campaign was always a perplexing one. In common with other commanders, she was embarrassed at every turn by the inadequacy of the means at command to the end in view.

Besides the family she must feed, she had eleven wounded Confederates in the house—there were anywhere from half a dozen to a dozen such in every Virginia house at that time, for the reason that the hospitals were overcrowded. Most of these wounded Confederates were convalescent now, and they had their appetites with them. It was Agatha's problem to provide dinner for them, and the task was not an easy one.

The young dandelions had got beyond their first and succulent youth, so that Agatha was obliged to reject them as possible materials of what the Virginians called "salad." The word

"salad" in Virginia in those old days meant "greens," and "greens" was usually an herb of some sort boiled with bacon.

Rejecting the dandelions, she had passed to the young mustard plants, only to be in like manner disappointed. The mustard was hopelessly overgrown. There remained only the young beets, whose tops were succulently juvenile, but whose red roots were still so far unformed in the earth as to count for nothing as a food supply.

"It seems a pity to pull them up," she said to Sappho, who accompanied her, "when if we left them alone they would give us so much more food in August and September."

"Yes, I know, chile. But, you see, August and September may never live to git here an' so de bes' way is jes' to make de mos' o' what we all's got now, an' never min' about de future. But dere's radish tops an' turnip tops, an' ef you ain't too partic'lar, they's some collards big enough to cut. They ain't enough o' any one thing to make a dish for the 'leven soldiers an' the fambly, but ef we mixes 'em togedder, an' biles 'em all to pieces, nobody'll ever know de difference. You'se got a jowl to bile 'em with, an' that goes a long ways dese times. De jowl ain't very big, but I'se got about a pint o' drippin's to add to it, an' that'll

make the greens so fat an' juscious-like dat nobody'll care for much actuable meat. Wonder ef little Marse Bob 'll bring in a fish. That'd help out moraciously."

Precisely what Sappho's adjectives and adverbs meant nobody ever dared inquire. Sappho was not the sort of person to submit to cross-examination with equanimity, and so far as is known, nobody ever ventured to question her as to her English.

But Bob did not bring in a fish that day. Bob was a truthful boy, and so when Agatha asked him if he had caught a fish, he answered:

"Yes, but—"

"But what Bob? Was it a little one—too little to serve at dinner?"

"No, it wasn't. It was a three-pounder flat back."

"Tell me about it, Bob," said Agatha, persuasively. "What about it? It would have helped us out at dinner."

"Yes, I know; but Ned Burton was awfully hungry. I don't think he'd had anything to eat for days past, and—"

"Wait, Bob. Come over here under the willow trees. There, now there is nobody to hear; tell me what you mean."

So Bob told her, ending by the delivery of

Burton's letter, which she read there under the great willow tree. When she had finished she said to her little brother:

"Of course you did right, Bob, to cook the fish for Mr. Burton. Always remember, Bob, that the first law of Warren House is hospitality. Go away somewhere, Bob. I want to think."

If Bob had been less courteous than he was —if, instead of obeying his orders to go away, he had looked back, he might have been puzzled to understand why Agatha found it necessary to use her handkerchief so freely in aid of her "thinking." As it was, Agatha had her "good cry" all to herself, for the reason that Sappho's soul, or Psyche, or some other mythological entity known only to her, had suddenly summoned her away from the scene, with deliberate intent to commit a crime.

It would be misleading to call Sappho an habitual criminal. She had never in all her life done anything with a selfish purpose; but, on the other hand, she had never for one moment hesitated to do any unselfishly loving thing in consideration of its unlawfulness or of any evil accusation that might be urged against it. When Agatha and Arthur had been little children and had craved more cookies than were deemed good for them by white

wisdom, Sappho's conscience had never reproached her for stealing the coveted cakes for them, nor had she hesitated to blame the shortage, when discovered, upon "dem pesky rats what seems to me to kin crawl through a crack too little to let even a smell git in or out." When Bob, in pinafores, had been forbidden to go to the river to indulge his premature passion for fishing, Sappho had not hesitated to accompany him to a pond near the river, and permit him there to muddy his clothes at will in catching the fish called roach, on small pellets of corn bread. Afterward she would sneak him into the house by some back entrance, "clean him up" and then secretly and by night wash and iron his soiled garments and return them to their proper places, so that nobody might ever know of his transgression.

If suspected of these sins and questioned concerning them, Sappho never lied. Her authority as "Mammy" gave her a far more effective weapon of defense.

"What for is you a criss-cross questionin' o' your ole mammy?" she would say even to Mrs. Warren. "Doan you know mammy ain't a-goin' to be criss-cross-questioned by nobody dat wears de similitude?" Sappho had got the word "similitude," together with some small glimmering of its meaning from the sermons

of a preacher whose eloquence was highly regarded in that time. "Doan you know Sappho ain't a-goin' to answer no questions, like Eve did in de garden an' a gittin' herself into trouble by doin' it? Go long o' you, chile, an' leave Sappho to ten' to things that has got to be looked after. Sappho ain't got no time to be botherin' wid your inquirendos." She had caught that word from a lawyer, and she justly regarded it as "a clincher." So when she had launched it she treated the conversation as one ended to her own satisfaction, and bustled out of the room upon pretense of having something much more important on her habitually overtaxed mind.

On this occasion Sappho had one of her inspirations of sin. When, a few months before, the order had come that all cattle, hogs, sheep and other food producing animals, should be turned over to the commissaries of the army, Sappho's foresight had taken alarm.

"What's our own folks gwine to eat?" she asked as a poser. "Well, I reckon not," she answered to the satisfaction of her own mind, and she made her arrangements accordingly.

What Sappho did not know about the plantation on which she and her forbears for generations past had been born, was not known to anybody else, white or black, anywhere on

earth. Her authority over the negroes was scarcely less indisputable than her authority over the whites whom she had "raised," as she put it.

She knew every sheep and pig on the plantation; she knew every nook and corner of that vast domain, and she knew that her orders would be carried out to the letter. She had carefully inculcated among the negroes the belief that she was a voodoo, able by easy incantation, not only to subject her enemies to unimaginable torture, but to find out the most recondite thought of every such enemy.

When the order came, therefore, for the delivery of all the food animals, with a few unimportant exceptions, to the agents of the government, Sappho gave a few small orders of her own. To her son Ben, who was old enough by that time to " 'long to de chu'ch," and who by that ecclesiastical affiliation became "Br'er Ben" even to his mother, although she would not have hesitated to spank him upon proper occasion—she said: "You go way over to de grave yard, whar nobody else ever goes, 'cause dey's afeared to, an' you go way over to de middle of it, whar de trees is thick an' de thicket's thicker, an' right dar you build a pen, usin' sech rails as you can take from de fences 'thout spilin dere appearance an' 'tractin' 'ten-

tion to 'em. Dat's yure only instructions jes' now."

Ben had understood, and in dealing with his mother his attitude of mind was that of the Oriental, whose response to his king is: "to hear is to obey." Ben had not been surprised to find his pen filled a few days later with a few sheep, a litter of half-grown pigs, and a small flock of geese. Nor had he been surprised when his mother, instead of avoiding the subject of the grave yard, delicately emphasized its uncanniness by talking incessantly of the strange noises that came from its unhallowed precincts and the weird lights that sometimes glimmered thence by night. The curiosity she thus awakened was not of a kind to stimulate personal investigation on the part of the plantation people, and so her little menagerie of "sequesterated" animals—Sappho delighted in honoring large words with superfluous syallables—dwelt in the grave yard at peace, except when Ben, under her inspiration, invaded it for purposes planned by her.

This happened now and then, and always without warning. Whenever it happened the Warren House table found itself mysteriously replenished by a quarter of lamb or a green goose or a "roastin' o' shoat."

Whence these supplies came, on their infre-

quent occasions of coming—for, in fact, they came only at long intervals and always in the nick of time, when food happened to be more than ordinarily short—whence they came only Sappho knew and only Ben could guess. Sappho would not tell and Ben dared not.

If curiously questioned about where a supply of shoat had come from, Sappho would raise her bandanna-turbaned head to its most dignified and repellant posture and reply:

"I buy'ed it from a man."

The answer was given in a fashion that by no means invited further questioning. Indeed, there was nobody on the plantation, white or black, who would have dared assail her dignity with further questionings when her attitude seemed to challenge and defy impertinence of such sort.

Among the negroes no further questioning seemed necessary. They knew that Sappho had a pot of money buried somewhere. They had heard so all their lives, not only with regard to her but with regard to every other old negro of influence on the plantation, and of course one must implicitly believe what one has always heard. Otherwise religion itself would be assailed in its very foundations.

How much money there was in Sappho's buried kettle, was a matter of highly varying

conjecture. Those to whom half a dollar seemed a fabulous dream of wealth placed the contents of the kettle at fifteen dollars. Others, possessed of more generous imaginations, fixed upon fifteen hundred dollars as approximately the correct sum, while a few, still more richly endowed, were inclined to regard fifteen millions as a manifestly inadequate estimate.

But whatever the measure of her hidden horde might be, and however estimates of it might differ, there was nowhere among the negroes the smallest doubt of Sappho's ability to buy and pay for anything that anybody might have to sell.

As for the white folk—well, Sappho was not in the habit of answering their questions when she chose not to do so, nor was it her practise to tolerate impertinent curiosity on their part as to any doings of hers.

So, on this morning, when Agatha retired to a shady nook to read Ned Burton's letter and to weep a little over it, Sappho summoned Ben and sent him to the distant grave yard.

It was a crime at law at that time to kill a sheep—even one's own—but there were two forequarters of lamb on the Warren House dinner table that day, in presence of which the poor little jowl that Agatha had reckoned upon as her piece de resistance sank into the insig-

nificance of an unobserved side dish, of which nobody partook. When the meal was over, Agatha wrapped the poor viand in a worn and frayed napkin—for paper of every kind was incredibly scarce in Virginia then—added to it a pone of corn bread, and, escaping from the company, sought Bob, who was busy repairing his fish lines out under the locust trees.

She placed the parcel in the boy's hands without a word of injunction or explanation. All she said was:

"There, Bob. There's the jowl and a pone of bread. They may stave off starvation."

Bob understood. Night was not far away, but Bob was an old hand at night prowling. The 'possums he had caught upon midnight and after, midnight excursions into the forests round about had constituted not only an appreciable but a very important contribution to the sum total of Warren House supplies during the Winter months. He knew not only every turn of every road within five or even ten miles of Warren House, but he knew also the minute geography of every stretch of woodland so thoroughly that the starlight itself was not more at home than he in the glades of that region.

"I'll try, Aggy." That was all he said as he

accepted the bundle from her hand. But as she was leaving him he called out:

"Oh, I say, Aggy. Don't let Aunt Molly know I'm out to-night. She worries so, you know. Just go up as usual to put Betty and me to bed and to hear our prayers, and then you go back just as if I was up-stairs, and don't say anything. If I get home during the night I can crawl in over the back porch. Please leave the window open by an inch, won't you? You see it tears my nails all to bits to open the pesky thing. That's all. If I don't get back till after daylight of course you'll think I'm down at the river looking after my lines."

Thus was there a conspiracy between this boy and his young woman sister, wholly without that "breathing together" which the law supposes to be the essence of conspiracy.

Agatha returned to her wounded Confederate guests. Bob set off upon a search.

It was nearly morning when he came upon Ned Burton, sleeping under some chinquapin bushes that occupied an opening far within a woodland. Bob had wrought the whole thing out in his own acute young mind. Ned Burton was an escaped prisoner, trying to make his way north. He must therefore travel mainly by night, so Bob had not expected to find him anywhere near Warren House. He must get

across James River, and of course he could not do that at any of the regular ferries. There was a man at a certain point on the river who had been twice or thrice arrested for helping escaping prisoners; so Bob argued that Ned Burton would travel toward that man's mill. He calculated about the hour that Ned would deem it safe to set out, and about how far he could travel in his weakened condition that night. He knew that beyond this stretch of woodlands and its enclosed cluster of chinquapins there lay an open country of many miles. He was sure Burton could not reach and cross that vast stretch that night, so he decided that the place in which to look for the fugitive was in the chinquapin barren, and there he found him.

But he had seen cavalry scouts round about, and he was cautious. All that he said in delivering his packet was:

"Agatha sent you this. Don't talk. It's dangerous."

With that he slid away among the bushes.

Burton, who had tasted no food since the previous morning and was now nearly famished, opened his clasp knife and set greedily to work upon the jowl and corn pone. But he carefully folded the napkin in which the food had been wrapped and thrust it into the breast

of his flannel shirt as a precious souvenir, resolving to carry it there night and day until the time should come when he could in person return it to Agatha with some expression of the love he felt for her.

What mattered it to him that the piece of linen was old and worn and two holes were in it? What matters anything where love is?

CHAPTER XIII

THE GREAT WAR GAME

After Chancellorsville Lee again had in his hands the direction of the course of the war. Again he moved into the North with that extraordinary fighting machine known as the Army of Northern Virginia. He seemed able to do as he pleased with it. It had been outnumbered nearly two to one, and often even three to one, on every field on which it had encountered an enemy, but, as General Hooker himself testified before the "Committee on the Conduct of the War," that Army of Northern Virginia manifested everywhere a resistless steadiness under fire that rendered its lines unbreakable by any force that could be hurled against it.

At Gettysburg, in the early days of that year's July, it was baffled, but not by any means beaten. Its advance was bloodily checked, but as a stupendous fighting machine its effectiveness was in nowise impaired. Its career of conquest was arrested, but as it slowly and sullenly retired to the south of the Potomac and thence to its chosen line of defense on the

Rappahannock and the Rapidan, not even the most recklessly daring of its foes thought it wise to provoke further battle with it.

Then came another long wait in the war in Virginia. During all the time from July, 1863, until the early days of May, 1864, the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia confronted each other doing nothing. But in the meanwhile something of supreme importance had happened. Ulysses S. Grant had been brought from the West and placed in command of all the armies of the Union, succeeding the incapable Halleck in authority, to direct the conduct of the war.

Grant was not regarded as a "brilliant" man. He never wore fine uniforms, or surrounded himself with a staff tricked out in gold lace. He was not accustomed to play to the galleries in his military operations. He did nothing for show, nothing for "effect." Above all, he said nothing. He sought no applause at the hands of the newspaper correspondents. Upon occasions he kicked them out of his lines when they made themselves obnoxious by publishing things he wished to keep secret. His one qualification for chief command was his possession of common sense and his reliance upon it in strategy.

He, first of all men, saw clearly the truth

that the strength of the Confederacy lay not in the possession of this, that, or the other strategic position, but in the fighting capacity of the Army of Northern Virginia. He, first of all men, realized that while that army existed in its fighting strength the Confederacy must endure; that the proper "objective" of every campaign should be Lee's army; that the destruction of that fighting force was the one military thing to be sought.

Accordingly, now that he was entrusted with supreme command, this man of common sense set himself the task of destroying or crippling Lee's army.

He began by concentrating in Virginia a force thrice as great as Lee's. Next he ordered operations of an active kind in every part of the country, so that the Confederates everywhere should have their hands too full to spare so much as a regiment or a battery for Lee's reinforcement. Having made these preparations, he set out to assail Lee, to crush the Army of Northern Virginia with overwhelming numbers, if that should prove to be possible, and, if not, then to cripple it to the utmost extent in his power.

Ignorant military critics of the kind who never had anything to do with war, have pointed out that Grant sacrificed thousands of lives

in his advance upon Richmond when, by a march up the peninsula, he might have reached the gates of the Confederate capital almost without the loss of a man.

Such criticism ignores the fundamental idea of Grant's campaign. His primary purpose was not to place his army before Richmond with the least possible fighting, but to assail Lee in the open and force all the fighting he could, by way of crippling that army in which, as he clearly saw, the strength of the Confederacy lay.

Had he reached his positions before Richmond and Petersburg without fighting, he would have met there the Army of Northern Virginia in its full fighting force, unimpaired in its strength by the loss of a man, and he would then have had to fight that army behind breastworks constructed under the direction of the greatest military engineer of modern times.

Grant's simple common sense rose superior to "tactics." Instead of creeping upon Richmond he moved his army of superbly seasoned veterans across the Rapidan and assailed Lee in the Wilderness. After three days of such fighting as has rarely been seen on earth, he found himself baffled but not beaten. He had hoped to turn Lee's flank and interpose his army between Lee and Richmond. In that endeavor he had failed.

But, this strange man who persisted in regarding common sense as superior to tactics, was not only not beaten, but was not even discouraged by this failure of purpose. Technically he had lost a battle; he had failed to accomplish the strategic purpose of his movement. But, being a man of common sense rather than a tactical strategist, he considered the fact that he still had under his command one of the bravest and best armies ever assembled on earth; that he had inflicted severe loss upon Lee, and that he still had "all Summer" in which to "fight it out on this line."

Instead of going back across the river, therefore, as all his predecessors in command had done in like circumstances, he moved by his left flank to Spottsylvania Court House, and there renewed his tremendous assaults upon the army which constituted the backbone of Confederate power.

Baffled again, but again not beaten, he moved once more by his left flank to Cold Harbor. There occurred one of the bloodiest conflicts of the war. In a desperate assault upon Lee's entrenched lines, ten thousand of Grant's men fell within less than twenty minutes, inflicting a loss of less than one thousand upon their adversaries.

Some have characterized that assault as a

blunder; it was certainly a mistake; but the men who made it so daringly were heroes, as the men who met it so determinedly were.

Failing either to turn Lee's flank or to break through his lines, Grant moved again by his left flank, repeating his former tactics, but with this difference: At the Wilderness, at Spottsylvania, at Hanover Court House, and in the movement upon Cold Harbor, Grant's great adversary had been able, by extreme alertness, to observe his movements and to meet him in full force at every point; this time Lee could not observe him at all, for the reason that Federal gunboats lay in the James River, and Grant's operations were conducted behind their cover and in complete secrecy. Lee could not know whether Grant was crossing the river with intent to capture Petersburg and cut the rail communications of Richmond with the South, or whether he meant to hurl his tremendous columns against Richmond directly. During an anxious twenty-four hours Lee was kept in this uncertainty and compelled by it to scatter his meagre force over thirty-odd miles of defensive line. He dared not concentrate at any point lest some other should prove to be the destined object of attack. He dared not send adequate bodies of troops to Petersburg lest Grant should be

massing his entire force for a tremendous and overwhelming assault upon Richmond.

Here were two great masters of the war game, playing grand strategy on a stupendous scale.

Again Grant put aside brilliancy for common sense. While all the newspaper strategists of the desk were demonstrating the necessity he was under of hurling his heavy columns upon the immediate defenses of Richmond, he moved against Petersburg instead, on the common-sense ground that Petersburg, with its command of Richmond's railroad communication south was the effective key to Richmond. He saw, and Robert E. Lee saw, as the newspaper strategists did not see, that if he could capture Petersburg, the Confederates must instantly abandon Richmond.

Accordingly, he made a dash for Petersburg, hoping to capture the place and secure control of the railroad there, before Lee—standing on the defensive before Richmond—could throw a sufficient force across the river and twenty-two miles south, to defend the position.

In this he very nearly succeeded. Perhaps if he had been there in person or if Phil Sheridan or some other such man of energy had been there, he would have succeeded.

As it was, the head of his columns had over-

run the defenses and pushed their way into the outskirts of the little city before the veterans of the Army of Northern Virginia came at double quick into the streets.

They were wayworn and weary, but they were full of dauntless spirit. They were literally starving men, many of them barefoot, all of them ragged, and all of them exhausted by the ceaseless marching and fighting that had been their daily and nightly portion from that first early morning's fight in the Wilderness until now. But they were full of fight still and their cause hung upon their ability to drive back those hurrying heads of columns before their supports should come up; to repossess the lines of defense before it should be too late; to re-establish Confederate possession of Petersburg before the multitudes of their opponents should overwhelm their resistance.

Hungry, footsore, weary, well-nigh exhausted, they swept through the town, giving no heed to their own sufferings, caring nothing for the fate that might befall them, reckless of everything on earth except the duty that lay before them, of rescuing Petersburg while yet there was time.

Time was everything, and these men knew it. With exhausted frames and empty stomachs and eyes inflamed for lack of sleep, these

men actually trotted that twenty-odd miles, increasing the trot to a sprinting pace now and then, with one single purpose animating their souls—the purpose to be in time to save Petersburg and their cherished cause.

It was desperately exhausting work, but it was heroic far beyond the heroism of mere daring. It was the heroism of endurance, pressed to the utmost limit of human possibility.

Many scores of those men fell by the wayside and died there, not of wounds, but of sheer inability to go on living. They had taxed their vitality beyond its ability to respond. Their strength to do was utterly gone; their strength to endure was completely exhausted. Their brave hearts ceased to beat for lack of strength to beat. Some of them actually starved to death, and all of them were suffering the agonizing pangs of hunger. For weeks they had been without sufficient food to repair the daily waste of their emaciated bodies. Sometimes they had received a daily dole of one hardtack biscuit to the man; sometimes the dole had come to them only twice in three days. Twice or thrice during that terrible orgy of marching and fighting, these famished heroes had received each a meagre slice of measly salt pork or of half-spoiled bacon, and had eaten the ration raw lest there be waste in cooking it.

As they marched they stripped waste fields of such wild onions as they bore, and filled their bellies with the leaves and twigs of forest trees for lack of other sustenance.

As these famishing men entered Petersburg they knew there was food in the storehouses of the town, but they stopped not nor stayed. At the trot or at the run and almost without command, they rushed forward and dashed themselves against the enemy's advancing lines. They delivered a rattling fire as they ran forward, but they did not stop long at any point to fight at long arm with lead. Emptying their pieces into the faces of the enemy, they rushed forward with resistless steel and fairly pushed their foes back, while the batteries vied with the footmen in the charge.

Coming up at a gallop, they would swing their guns into position, fire canister or shrapnel at the rate of eight or ten rounds a minute, for twenty or thirty seconds, and then, as their foes gave way, they would limber to the front again and madly gallop forward to the next point from which firing could be done to advantage.

The men in blue resisted this terrible onslaught as obstinately and as heroically as it was possible to do, hoping that reinforcements would come in time to enable them to hold

what they had gained by their dash, or to retain some part of it at any rate. They retired slowly from the outskirts of the town, contesting every inch of the ground with the obstinacy of determined veterans. But their supports did not come up as soon as they had hoped, and the red-eyed Confederates had got there sooner than they had expected, and so the assailants were slowly but surely pushed out of the town, up the hills and beyond the ridge on which the Jerusalem turnpike lay.

There the struggle ended with the oncoming darkness, and throughout the hours of that night in early June, 1864, the men on either side who had so desperately fought all day, toiled all night in throwing up those slender lines of earthworks behind which the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia were to oppose each other for ten long months to come, so near together at certain points as almost to see the color of each other's eyes.

This was war at its best, so far as human heroism is concerned. It illustrated, as few passages in the history of war have done, the heroism of doing, the heroism of daring, and —worthiest of all—the heroism of limitless enduring.

CHAPTER XIV

A FRAGMENTARY FLAG OF TRUCE

When little Bob placed the ragged napkin containing the jowl and the pone of corn bread in Ned Burton's hands and quickly slipped away through the chinquapin bushes, Burton realized that he had his answer from Agatha. To his gift of gold pieces, useless to him but potent perhaps to save her from starvation, she had responded with a gift of food, taken from a slender and rapidly vanishing supply, to meet his present and very pressing need, and to give him at least a chance of escape to his home at the North, where he might recover from his wound.

No line of writing accompanied the gift, but Burton felt that the gift itself was response enough. It meant that she had accepted his offer of the gold pieces in the spirit in which it was intended.

It meant more than that to Ned Burton. It meant that Agatha Warren had given him the

love he longed for, but which she had not otherwise confessed.

His need of the little food supply was great and pressing, but the love assurance he drew from the fact that Agatha had sent it to him, was even more effective in bracing him for the toilsome and very dangerous journey he had yet before him.

He lay there in the chinquapin thicket all day. When night fell again he moved cautiously northward, jealously guarding the little store of foodstuff that Agatha had sent to him, against a time of even sorer need. He was hungry enough to eat the whole of it out of hand, but he understood with what intent it had been sent to him, and so he resolutely compelled himself to be content with the merest nibble at it at such times as hunger became too clamorous for resistance.

His wound was becoming inflamed now and the fever that accompanied the inflammation sadly impaired his strength, but little by little he made his way across James River and on toward the North, until at last he found himself utterly spent, in a thicket of brambles by the side of a spring, far up in Fairfax County.

"Here I must stay till I perish," he thought with heroic resolution. "My food supply is

exhausted, and I suppose I am in need of nourishment, though I no longer crave food. It is only water that I want now—water and to be still—and there is sweet water here. The fever has conquered me, and the burning in the wound is intolerable."

With that he took Agatha's frayed napkin from his breast and plunged it into the cool waters of the spring. Then placing it, still saturated and dripping, on his inflamed wound he fell into something resembling a feverish sleep.

The reader will remember that all this occurred in the Summer before the campaign of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor described in the last chapter. Ned Burton was wounded at Chancellorsville, and his effort to escape was made after the campaign of Gettysburg, and while the two armies were facing each other again on the Rappahannock and the Rapidan, and while the country north of those rivers was a no-man's land.

Burton was aroused by a little squad of Confederate prowlers, under command of a sergeant, who were in that country at momentary peril of their lives, merely as eyes of the army, looking for possible information, and not engaged in any of the more active and definite errands of war.

The sergeant in command of the Confederate squad seemed a decent sort of fellow, in no way disposed to deal harshly with a wounded enemy. When he asked Burton what he was doing there, the half-dazed young man replied frankly that he was an escaped prisoner, and briefly told the story of his wanderings.

"Well, now," said the sergeant, "I reckon we might recapture you, but I don't see as it would pay. We've got a lot o' rough riding to do to get back to our lines, and a lot o' lookin' out sharp, I reckon; and I reckon you'd be dead before we got far. Besides, we fellers counts ourselves white men, and I reckon the whitest thing we can do with you is to turn you over to a Yankee picket that's a layin' not far from here. We say, on our side, as it's cheaper to fight you fellers than to feed you, and I reckon it's so. Anyhow, I reckon *you* ain't in a fit condition to do any fightin' for a good while to come, and I ain't got no ambulance anywhere about my clothes, and so ef you've got anything in the shape of a white rag about you—anything as we can use as a flag o' truce like—I'll go over an' tell them fellers you're here an' in need o' their assistance. You see, we ain't got nothin' white. Even our shirts is gray or red or brown, so we can't make flags o' truce out'n their tails.

An' as for han'kerchers, why, we fellers hasn't got none. Has you got anythin' white what'll do the trick?"

With a sentiment that it was Agatha who was serving him in this extreme emergency, Ned Burton stripped the napkin off his wounded shoulder, shook it out, and offered it to the sergeant, whose men, meanwhile, were alertly lying all about, with carbines in hand, watching the landscape and standing guard against possible surprise.

"Perhaps you can use that," Burton said.

"Fine!" exclaimed the other. "It's cleaner and whiter than any other flag of truce I ever saw. Only I suppose you'll want it back, Lieutenant?"

"I should like to have it back," he said feebly; "but nothing matters."

"There you're wrong!" said the Confederate, as he cut a wand and attached the napkin to it. "There you are wrong. Everything matters. You've got a mother at home, or a brother, or a sister, or a wife, or a sweetheart —*somebody* to whom everything matters. That's the way with all of us on both sides, and that's the devil of it. Ef it was only fightin' we fellers could fight it out without a flinch, but, damn it, there's the women and children and the old folks at home to consider

all the time, an' we can't git rid o' considerin' of 'em. That's why I'm agoin' to turn you over to the picket instead o' joltin' you off to your death, as I'd orter do, I reckon. Anyhow, here goes!"

And with that he mounted and rode toward the Federal picket post, waving the wet napkin as a signal of truce.

The conference was by no means a formal one. To the Federal picket commander the Confederate Sergeant said:

"I've got a Yank lieutenant over there by the spring. He's wounded, and he's in a bad way. I'm agoin' to leave him for you to 'tend to, ef you'll be half decent about it. I've done got enough men to clean you out ef it come to a fight, an' I'll do it, ef I must. But ef you're reasonable, like, you can rescue your prisoner and send him home or to a hospital. All I ask is that you sha'n't budge, you an' your men, from where you are, till me an' my men is clear beyond that next ridge o' chestnuts. We'll go at once, but we'll look back; that's natural like, to ole soldiers. Ef you budges from your present position till we git away over that ridge, we'll turn around and fight you till the Angel Gabriel blows his horn. But ef you lay still till we passes clear over the ridge, then you can go in peace an' git your

wounded lieutenant. I promise not to interfere, no matter how slow you have to be in gittin' him away. Is it a fa'r, squar' deal? Is it Yes, or is it No? Say the word, one way or the other, an' that'll make an end of the business."

"Thank you for your courtesy," said the lieutenant in charge of the picket post. "I will take care of the wounded man. I will hold my force here until you and your command shall have passed beyond the ridge. Better than that, Sergeant, if you are contemplating no attack upon our posts, I promise you not in any way to interfere with your return to your own lines. Of course, I—"

"Of course you cannot promise for anybody but yourself. That's all right. If anybody else attacks me—well—"

"You know how to take care of yourself, of course. I understand that, and between you and me, Sergeant, I haven't the smallest doubt of your ability to do that. You 'look the part,' and I've had quite enough to do with you fellows to know how much your looks mean. Anyhow, it's man and man between you and me. You are to go away as peacefully as you please, with the full and perfect understanding that you stand ready to fight your way if need be, and that you aren't asking odds of

anybody; and when you are completely gone, we are to go over to the spring and do what we can for our wounded lieutenant who languishes there."

"I couldn't have worded the thing out better, Lieutenant, if I had gone to school four years more than I did. What you've said is what I mean. Good-bye, and good luck to you, except when you're coming our way!" Then after a pause the Sergeant said:

"Ain't it a pity us fellers has got to fight one another when we hain't got nothin' whatever agin' one another?"

"Yes, it is a pity," said the other; "a grievous pity. But that is the substance of this war. The politicians—never mind that. We fellows on both sides have got our duty to do, and—"

"And by all the gods, we'll do it!"

"Of course we will. That's what we are men for—we Yanks and you Johnny Rebs. Good-bye, old fellow. Take yourself off in a hurry, while I'm in control of the situation on this side."

CHAPTER XV

A MEETING OF OLD FOES

Ned Burton was none too soon in getting to a hospital. His wound was in a dangerously inflamed state and his malarial fever was raging.

With a touch of sentiment which seemed a trifle surprising in one so rough and uncouth as he, the Confederate sergeant returned the half-dried napkin to him, and before his friends came to his rescue he had securely deposited it inside the breast of his coat.

For a month he lay in a hospital near Washington. Then his mother, who had promptly gone thither to care for him, removed him as gently as she could to his home in the wholesome air of the North.

"Let me carry the napkin," he said to her as she had him placed upon a cot on the train. "It saved my life twice. I have a sentiment with regard to it."

The mother understood.

"There's a woman behind all that," she re-

flected, "and he loves her. I wish it might have been some other than a Virginia woman, but my boy loves her and that is enough."

Late in August Ned Burton was strong enough to go from his home town to Lake George, ten miles or so away, and there, with nobody but a guide to serve as his camp fellow, he lolled upon the rocks, strolled in the woodlands and among the cliffs, and fished in the limpid waters of the beautiful bays. As his strength increased, he rigged a Massachusetts dory and whenever the wind blew fiercely he set out upon the water to breast the storms of approaching Autumn and "to fight it out with hostile nature," as he expressed the thought that was dominant in his mind.

"A strong man must fight something," he said, "if only in satisfaction of the laws of his being, and I'd rather fight squalls and tempests than men, because squalls and tempests have no mothers, wives or children to be bereft when they are beaten in the contest."

But, sentimentalist as he was, and as all strong men are if they are not mere brutes, Ned Burton was eager to get back to his duty in the army. He had no love for the "brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting art," but he recognized it as one of the ways still chosen by imperfectly civilized men of settling questions,

and in his view the question at issue in the war he had entered as a soldier was that of the very existence of his country.

He was eager, therefore, to get back to his soldier work, but it was not until late in the Winter that his physicians consented to his return to duty. The command to which he had belonged had in the meantime completed its term of service and was now no longer in existence as a military entity. But General Griffin had secured for him a lieutenant's commission in the regular army, in no way dependent upon the shiftings of volunteer forces, and he was serving with General Griffin when that officer, in the Spring, was summoned by General Grant to serve on his staff during the campaign of 1864. Lieutenant Burton went with him, by his request, as an aide-de-camp, in whose fidelity, courage and devotion the Lieutenant-General might trust implicitly.

Generals in command of great armies on campaign have need of such officers as this, and General Grant was glad to accept Burton on Griffin's recommendation.

During the campaign from the Wilderness to Petersburg, Burton commended himself to his superiors, and especially to General Grant, as a silent, unassuming officer who could be implicitly trusted, not only as to courage and

fidelity, but equally as to his judgment and discretion. At every headquarters there are men who are mainly ornamental—dashing fellows who attract attention—and there are others who are mainly useful. Ned Burton belonged to the latter class. He had patience, industry, and habitual self-possession; to these qualities he added alert intelligence, great readiness of resource, and an unstinted devotion to duty.

Such a man, occupying a subordinate place, naturally had a varied succession of duties assigned to him. Whenever anything particularly difficult or requiring special discretion was to be done by some one of the younger members of the staff the suggestion "Let Burton do that" rose readily to all lips.

One day in the early Spring of 1865, after Grant had pushed his left slowly but continuously south and west, to and across the Weldon Railroad, Ned Burton was sent to the extreme left flank and even beyond it, to an outpost held for this single day and purpose. His orders were to be there, representing headquarters, and to conduct himself in all cases according to his own best judgment.

There was not a hint of what was expected to happen at the remote and perilously untenable outpost, not a suggestion of the nature of

the service he was expected to render or the conditions under which he was to render it.

When he reached the outpost he found it held by a force of cavalry, and held only by continual skirmishing with the enemy, who manifestly objected to its presence and as manifestly intended to drive it away presently.

Burton reported to the cavalry officer in command, who showed him only so much of civility as was rendered necessary by the fact that Burton officially represented that awe-inspiring thing "Headquarters." That cavalry officer had missed his breakfast that morning because of this "Tomfool" expedition, as he called it, and he was in a bad humor.

"All right, Lieutenant," he said, after reading Burton's orders; "the quietest nook I know of around here is down behind that little sand bank. If you'll squat yourself there, I'll try to bring in your man."

"What man?" asked Burton, in total ignorance of his own mission.

"Why, the man you're to interview, the 'agent of the secret service,' he is called in my orders—the damned spy, I call him."

Burton was quick to understand. This was not the first occasion on which he had been set to hear the reports of spies, to question them closely in order to discover what confidence it

was safe to give to their reports, and to submit the result to headquarters.

He loathed and detested the whole tribe of them, of course, as every honorable soldier must, though he recognized the necessity a commander in the field is under of employing such agents, if only to offset their employment by the other side. And he profoundly distrusted them, too. They were liars by profession, perjurers by trade—men who, for a price, and not a very high price at that, stood ready to betray the cause they had sworn to serve while taking pay from the representatives of that cause. Their utter lack of conscience as to truth-telling seemed to Burton the least and most venial of their depravities, though in itself it horrified his honest soul. Worse still was their utter recklessness of human lives to be sacrificed sometimes upon false confidence in their reports and statements.

Yet under his orders he must receive the reports of such men as these, closely question them, and himself submit the conclusions to which his investigation of their reports had led him.

On this occasion he was quick to understand what was in the wind. There was somewhere within the Confederate lines a spy professing

to be a Confederate soldier, but engaged by the Federals to secure and report such information as they needed. This man was to be "captured" by the cavalry and turned over to Burton for such cross-questioning as he might think necessary. After that the cavalry force was to retire or be driven back, and incidentally the spy and traitor and huckster of brave men's lives was to be permitted to "escape," so that he might go back into the Confederate lines and again betray the cause he had sworn to serve.

Let no word of this be misunderstood. Both sides employed these miserable creatures, because both sides must. On both sides the men were held in loathing, contempt and detestation, and on both sides even the information they brought was accepted with doubt and distrust, and only after the fullest questioning of possibilities. For it sometimes happened that the traitor who, for a price, offered to sell the secrets of his own side, sold instead and for another price false and misleading information which was likely to lure many thousands of brave men to needless death.

When a man jauntily perjures himself for hire and takes service on both sides, it is never very safe for either side to act upon what he says. In dealing with the traitor

there is always danger of encountering a double treachery.

Burton touched his hat to the cavalry commander, saying:

"I understand. I'll wait under the sand bank."

A minute later the cavalry officer, who seemed to know where to find what he wanted, made a dash and returned with three prisoners. One of these, upon some signal given and recognized, he ordered a trooper to escort to Burton behind the sand bank. The others he ordered to the rear as prisoners of war.

When the spy was brought around the corner of the sand bank, there was surprised recognition between the two young men.

"Alf. Blake!" exclaimed Burton, instantly recognizing the man whose insult to himself had been punished by expulsion from Warren House.

"Why, sure enough, it's Ned Burton," said the other. "Shake hands!"

But Burton affected not to hear this proffer of friendship, and Blake added:

"There is no reason for being grumpy, Ned. Or if there is it's only because of what I said at Warren House, and that was four years ago. You see, you an' I are serving the same cause now—"

"Pardon me!" said Burton interrupting. "It is not necessary to couple ourselves together. Our service is so different in its character. Besides, we've no time. Who is in command on this front?"

"General Warren."

"And you are serving with him?"

"Yes. You see, General Warren forgives an' forgets. He's taken me on as one of his scouts, to find out things. That's what gives me opportunity to make myself useful."

It was on Ned Burton's tongue to say some bitter, biting, blistering things in denunciation of the other's treachery and limitless dishonor. But, remembering his own duty, he held his tongue in leash. It was his duty to hear what Blake had to report, to question him closely as to its truthfulness, and to report his own conclusions. There was no time to waste. The Confederates were beginning to be impatient and to insist that the Federal cavalry force should quit its position.

"Go on and tell me what you have come to tell," said Burton. "Be quick. The time is short."

"Well, it's great news this time. General Lee has asked for the negroes and he is likely to get them."

"Just what do you mean? Be specific."

"Why, General Lee has asked Mr. Davis to enlist the negroes as soldiers—a hundred thousand of them or two hundred thousand, yes, half a million—and he's likely to get them. If he does, he'll set some of them, with a few white troops, to hold the lines here, and then he'll make another dash to the North. It's a big thing and it may mean trouble for Washington."

"How do you know all this?" asked Burton, coolly.

"Why, it's the talk all over the army for one thing, and the men are almost ready to mutiny if negroes are enlisted. But here's an article from the Richmond *Examiner* that confirms it."

"But will the negroes enlist?"

"Yes, every man of them, on a promise of freedom for themselves. They are eager to wear uniforms and be soldiers and free men."

"But they must know that if the North wins they will be free anyhow, under the emancipation proclamation."

"They don't seem to care for that. They want to be freed by their own masters. They want to go on living in the South. They want their old masters to go on liking them. They want to win their freedom by fighting for the South, so that they may be recognized here

where they have always lived and where they intend always to live. I tell you if the order is given to enlist them, every young negro in all this land will report for duty at the tap of the drum. There'll be half a million of them in the field before the Spring campaign opens, and General Grant will have a new job and a mighty tough one on his hands."

"But won't the white soldiers revolt?"

"No. They'll kick like steers for awhile, but they'll soon make up their minds that a reinforcement of half a million young negroes means victory for them. Besides, they're soldiers now."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, the Army of Northern Virginia is a fighting machine. The men who make it up have stopped thinking. They have left all that to General Lee. What he thinks, they think. What he orders they are ready to do. Whatever he says they approve. If he enlists the negroes they'll growl, but they'll say that 'Mars' Bob knows best,' and they'll go on fighting just the same. They worship Lee and he can do with them whatever he sees best to do. But if he gets the negroes as a reinforcement, I tell you this war has got to begin all over again. General Grant will be driven back, Lee will cross the Potomac again, and he'll have a

stronger force than he ever had before at his back. There is only one thing for it. General Grant must put a finish to the Army of Northern Virginia before the negroes are added to it, or nobody will ever put a finish to it at all."

"But what about feeding such a force?"

"It will feed itself from the storehouses of the North."

"And you think this danger is imminent?"

"Yes—it is certain, if two months hence the Army of Northern Virginia is still in existence. It will be reinforced by anywhere from two hundred thousand to half a million young negroes, every one a fighting man and every one fighting by the side of a veteran who stands ready to show him how."

At that moment there was a scurrying in front and an orderly came to Burton to say that the commander of the cavalry force could not hold the position many minutes longer.

"You're a man of capacity, Blake," said Burton, preparing to mount. "It's a pity you're—"

"It's a pity I'm such a scoundrel, you mean, Ned, and in a way it is so. But you see I didn't inherit a plantation. I wasn't born to a place in the aristocracy of Virginia. I've got my way to make; I'm a lawyer, you know, but I haven't any aristocratic clients—"

At that moment there was a rattle of car-

bines, a clatter of swords, a multitudinous popping of pistols, a scurry, confusion, and Ned Burton found himself far to the rear, accompanied by what was left of the little cavalry force that had guarded him. There were led horses with empty saddles. There were anxious women and children at the North who must presently hear that the riders of those led horses—their husbands, sons, brothers, fathers—had been sent to their deaths in order that Lieutenant Burton might hear what a conscienceless spy had to report concerning matters within the lines to which he had belonged.

Burton had his budget of news. Blake had escaped and returned to his own people, to betray them again. A dozen gallant fellows lay stark among the sumach bushes where the buzzards would presently scent them out.

Such is war.

BOOK THIRD

The End of an Epoch

CHAPTER I

ON ROBIN'S EGG BLUE PAPER

As he sat in his hovel that night after rendering his report, Ned Burton found his soul vexed by many perplexing details of personal concern.

His hovel was a mere hut of sticks, built near the lines and subject to the ceaseless fire of cannonry and small arms that endured by night and by day at Petersburg. Except for a rack of poles on which some dry broom straw grass was spread to serve the purposes of a bed, the only furniture was a slab table and a single chair which he had made for himself out of some fragments of rough board. The one chair sufficed him when alone, as he almost always was. When a fellow officer came in, he surrendered the chair to the visitor and himself sat upon the bed poles.

Ned Burton was a scholar, a thinker, a man accustomed to consider facts and to meditate upon them.

As he sat there in his solitary chair that night he reflected:

"Except that I have enough to eat, such as it is, there isn't a poverty-stricken pariah in the mountains of Virginia who isn't living as well as I am. And yet I'm a rich man. I might be living in undisturbed ease in my own home or I might buy or build a new and more luxurious home, and fill it with servants to anticipate my every want."

A few weeks before this time, Ned Burton had received important letters from the North. The other men engaged in a species of manufacture similar to his own had decided to combine their interests in order to control their trade and make an end of competition. His plant was a large one, richer in machinery than most others because of his own ingenuity in devising improvements. These people had offered him a sum of money which seemed to him princely in its magnitude, for a three-quarter interest in his factory, so that they might control it, leaving him a one-quarter interest and assuring him of a larger income from that one-quarter interest than the whole had before paid him. It was the time of in-

flation, when a depreciated currency and the obvious approach of the end of the war seemed to render anything and everything possible. It was the birth period of the trust idea, and Burton was one of the first to profit by it. He accepted the offer, made himself immediately rich, and freed himself for all time from the work of managing a business—work that had often galled his scholarly withers.

But on this night of his return from his interview with Blake, another and far sadder message of freedom had come to him. A letter, long delayed, told him that his mother was dead—killed in a carriage accident, he thought the letter said, but what mattered the details? Edgar Burton realized, as he sat there in his hut staring into the fire which he automatically replenished with sticks now and then, that he was absolutely alone in the world. This mother who had met a mercifully "sudden death" had been the only near relative he had on earth.

To love her and care for her had been the sole concerns of his life. For her sake he had rejoiced when wealth came to him in the way set forth above. His thought was that whatever might happen to him, this dear old mother of his was securely lifted above the possibility of want or need.

Now that he was struck in the face with the news that she was gone—what had he to live for? Of what good was his wealth to him as he sat there bereft, and looked around upon the poverty of his hut? For whose happiness could he use it or any part of it? Who was there in all the world to whom his living or dying, or anything else that related to him, was of the smallest consequence?

As he sat there brooding thus the thought of Agatha arose in his mind.

"But what of her?" he asked himself. "She is of another people than my own. I am to her 'the enemy.' I am helping with all my might in a war that has already impoverished her home and that threatens it with destruction. She has rejected my proffered love and I can never thrust even the suggestion of it upon her again without offense."

Then another thought arose in his soul.

"*Has* she rejected my love?"

He drew the worn napkin from his breast and scrutinized it as if it had been a document in the case he was considering.

"When she sent me food in that—considering all the circumstances—did she not unsay all that she had said in the rose garden years before? She did not consciously so mean it, of course, for she is too maidenly for that, but

did not her act bear witness that she took it all back, that she accepted the love I had offered, that she loved me in return and in spite of the enmity between my people and hers, in spite of all I was doing for the destruction of her home, her people, and the traditions of her life? Is not that poor, wornout old napkin, with frayed edges and unseemly holes, a message from her, saying she understands, and still loves; telling me that no matter what measure of hardship the war may inflict upon her and those dear to her, she approves my course in doing my duty as I understand it? That was her own phrase in speaking to me once as to the attitude of the Virginians. She said, as I remember it: 'We hold that every man who respects himself is in honor bound to do his duty as he understands it, no matter what the consequences may be.' She must know I am acting up to that dogma. If she did not, she would not have sent me that napkin and what it contained."

As he replaced the piece of linen, worn well nigh to lint now, but still bearing the Warren House mark, written, he was persuaded, by Agatha's own hand, another thought occurred to him:

"She is suffering want" he reflected, "and so are all the rest of those generous people at

Warren House who were so lavishly good to me a few years ago. I don't suppose she has had a new gown for years—not even a cheap calico thing. She is wearing out her eyes, her fingers and her soul in efforts to twist and turn old materials to new uses, not only or chiefly for herself, God bless her! but for those others who are dear to her. And she hasn't enough to eat, neither she nor the others. Even little Bob, who cooked his single fish in aid of my hunger, must often go without food now, while I have a comfortable fortune that I do not want. Oh, if I could only place it in her lap and say: 'There! a man has a right to do as he will with his own, and that is what I wish to do with mine!' But the spectre of war stalks between us and forbids me to go to her relief or to send one dollar of my useless wealth to minister in my stead to her comfort. Thank God, it is nearly over now!"

Then arose another thought. "And when it is over, what then? The Warrens will be even more abjectly impoverished than now. The negroes will be free, and they constitute the greater part of the property left to these people stripped and naked as they are. Their fields have been laid waste, their cattle, sheep and hogs have been converted into rations. Their barns are empty even of seed corn, and

their last resource, the poultry yard, has been stripped till there is neither the cackle of a hen nor the peeping of a chick within them. With their labor system destroyed, as it will be by the freeing of the negroes when the war ends, the value will drop out of their lands. Never on earth was a people so utterly impoverished as these Virginians will be when the end comes.

"I wonder if we shall issue rations to them. Damn it, I'll do that myself so far as the Warrens are concerned. After all, I shall find a use for my money, if the end is not too long delayed."

Ned Burton was a poet in his soul, but he was also upon occasion a very practical, hard-headed man of business. So now he set himself to work out this thought in practical ways. After midnight he suddenly rose, and went out of his hut, just as a mortar shell entered it from the roof and exploded, wrecking it beyond recovery. He gave no heed to the shell. He was too well used to such things to regard its destruction of his little abode as anything more than an inconsequent incident. He gave no regretful consideration to the ruined hut. He paid no attention to the whistling bullets that buzzed about his ears, as they had buzzed for many moons gone by. He had an idea, a

purpose, and he had no mind to let external things distract him from it.

He made his way along the line of hovels till he found the one he was looking for and entered it.

There was a low fire burning in the stick and mud chimney, and by its dim light Burton made out the sleeping bunk of his friend, Jack Grayson, who had command of a mortar fort at that point, and who, being a comfort-loving person, had built this hovel just behind his mortar pits, to sleep in when the enemy let him sleep. It was less than ten feet square, and it held absolutely nothing of furniture—not even a chair.

Burton and Grayson had been schoolmates and comrades from infancy, and now that they were soldiering together there was no trace of reserve or conventionality between them.

Going to Grayson's bunk, Burton said:

"Get up. I want you."

"Is the enemy bombarding?" asked the young Captain, springing up. "Man the guns, men!"

"No," answered Burton. "There's nothing going on except the usual thing. I waked you because I want you. You're a lawyer, and I need your services."

"Been arrested for stealing store signs? Or

is it a case of going in swimming in daytime without your clothes? Or, may be, you've been robbing an orchard? What is it, anyhow, Ned?"

"Your pleasantries are wasted on me tonight, Jack. I want you to draw up my will."

"Have you a 'premonition?' That's what they call it when a fellow sort o' loses his nerve, or gets homesick, or dreams of his best girl out in the apple orchard and gets to thinking he's never going to see her again. Is it that sort of thing? Because if it is I've got the remedy ready. I've a bottle of peach brandy seven years old, that'll do the trick for you in three minutes by the watch."

"It isn't that," answered Burton, laughing a little at his chronically cheerful friend's conceits. "It is only that I've been thinking. I—"

"Awfully bad thing to do, old fellow. You know, it's 'prejudicial to good order and military discipline' for any soldier under the rank of major-general to *think*. You might be court-martialed for it, you know."

At that moment a shell from a rifled cannon tore an ugly hole in the box-revetted parapet of one of Grayson's mortar pits, scattering earth all over the two friends, who were by this time standing on the mound over the

magazine. Grayson rose, shook the earth out of his ears and dug it out of his collar. Then turning to a sergeant he asked:

"Where did that shot come from, Sam?"

"From the piney hill battery," the sergeant answered.

"I thought so. That fellow has become very cocky since he got our range so accurately. Give him a dozen shells from pits nine and three, just to let him know we're awake and resent his impudence."

But the dozen shots ordered did not end the matter by any means. The lines of the two armies were so close together now that there were neither guard lines nor picket posts between. The Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia were staring each other in the face, with so small a distance between that each was nervously sensitive to the smallest hint on the part of the other of a desire to bring on a fight. So when Grayson's mortars hurled a dozen shells high in air in answer to that rifled cannon shot from the piney hill battery, every mortar and every field gun on that part of the line engaged in a bombardment of furious ferocity, that lasted for full two hours, while the infantry lining the breastworks on either side made the most of their instinctive desire to repel all pos-

sible advances by "multiplying fire," as it is called.

After an hour or two of this, the men on either side began to understand that no general attack was intended by their enemies, and so, little by little the firing was reduced to its usual desultoriness, each side firing just enough to keep itself awake and to notify its adversary that it was so.

As the wave of bombardment slackened, Grayson turned to Burton and said:

"'Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth.' That's a scriptural phrase, I believe, and anyhow it often comes to my mind these times. You see, I spent an hour to-day making that revetment of ammunition boxes and banking the earth up behind it. Just because some Johnny Reb made a good shot and undid my work, I got mad and ordered a dozen mortar shells hurled over his way. Just because of that a hundred guns and five or ten thousand muskets set to work vomiting iron and lead. There are some dozens of dead or wounded men in the trenches on both sides as a consequence, and even from the military point of view nothing whatever has been accomplished by it all. How the angels must laugh—or weep—as they look down upon us and see the folly of our ways!"

"You've turned philosopher and moralist, Jack," said Burton.

"Not a bit of it. At home I'm a lawyer. Down here I'm a soldier. I think it was the lawyer you wanted to consult."

"Yes. As I told you, I want you to draw up a will for me—one that will hold water and discourage the lawyers. Have you any writing materials?"

"No, but I can get them. I've three or four love-sick fellows in my command who keep stationery stores in their knapsacks and waste their substance in the payment of postage on letters to their sweethearts. I'll make one of them disgorge the paper, pens and ink we need. You see, Ned, a will loses none of its validity by being written upon cream-laid bath post or even on gilt-edged robin's egg blue paper. It's just as good in that shape as if written on the cheap law cap I keep in my office at home. I say, Snedeker, have you half a dozen sheets of paper anywhere?"

Reluctantly, as Ned Burton thought, the soldier addressed answered "Yes," and presently produced the desired writing materials.

Burton and Jack Grayson returned to Grayson's hut. Grayson threw a stick of wood on the smouldering fire, saying, as he did so, "It's against orders—my own orders, too—to have a

fire so near the magazine; but if we're to write we must have light. Still, it imperils the lives of my men."

There was a bucket of water there. Burton seized it and poured it over the blaze, completely extinguishing it.

"You're right," he said. "A spark from the fire blowing through the door of your magazine, where you have a thousand or fifteen hundred pounds of powder, might send every man in your command to kingdom come. There isn't any wind to-night, but one may spring up at any moment, and, besides, there's always the chance of a shell exploding in here. If one did that—well, your magazine door is open and it isn't six feet away. I've put your fire out. For heaven's sake, Grayson, let it stay put out."

"But where am I to write that will of yours? You want it done, and I don't blame you for that, for any one of these bee-like bullets buzzing about us may make it forever too late any minute, and of course I can't write in the dark."

"Look!" said Burton, "Look outside. It is growing daylight and your magazine door faces the east. Within five minutes there will be light enough for us to sit there on a powder monkey at the entrance, using another for a desk, and write whatever we please."

Day dawns rapidly in Virginia in the Spring, and within less than the suggested five minutes the two friends were sitting in the entrance to the powder magazine, able to see even the delicate colors of the paper before them.

"Now go ahead," said Burton. "Write the beginning in proper legal form."

"All right, I've done it," said the other after a moment or two.

"Oh, you can't have done it so soon as that," said Burton. "You can't have put in all about my being of sound mind and disposing memory and all the rest of it."

"I don't mean to. That's all nonsense and twaddle, a survival, you know. What I've got here is this:

" 'I, Edgar Burton, of Warren County, New York, serving in the army, make this my last will.' That's every word you need. Now what do you want to do with your things? Don't say 'give and bequeath' and 'devise' and all that to me. Just tell me what you want to do with your things and I'll put it on paper."

"I want to give everything I have in the world to Agatha Warren, of Warren House, near Appomattox Court House, Virginia."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Then why the devil didn't you write it

down on a piece of paper and sign it? What did you come here bothering me in the middle of the night for? Never mind answering. I'll have it all down in half a minute. There: 'I give all my property, real, personal and mixed, to Agatha Warren, of Warren House, Appomattox County, Virgina.'

"Now, who's to be executor? Miss Warren? Very well. No bonds, of course? All right. Here it is: 'I appoint the said Agatha Warren sole executrix of this my last will and testament, and I direct that she be not required to give bonds.' There!

"Now I'll write the formal executionary words, call some of my men to witness your signature, and you'll be just as comfortably provided for as if you were dead. I say, Ned, lets move into one of the pits. There's a rebel sharpshooter with a Whitworth rifle up a tree somewhere in that clump of timber over beyond the creek, and he's got our range. He'll pick one of us off if we don't shift our position. Sergeant, go up the hill there to Captain Pullman's fort and ask him if he won't please to bring one or two of his rifled guns to bear on that timber. Tell him, with my compliments, that there's a fellow over there annoying me with a Whitworth, and—well, he knows I have nothing but Colhorn mortars. Go quick."

The last injunction was suggested, perhaps, by the fact that at that instant one of the sharpshooter's bullets knocked off Captain Grayson's cap.

At any rate the two friends breakfasted together in a gun pit, and Burton returned to his wrecked quarters.

CHAPTER II

ON CHEAP FOOLSCAP

On his return to his wrecked hovel Ned Burton found there nothing that was worth gathering up and preserving. The mortar shell which had fallen through his roof and blown up his habitation had done the perfect work of war, which is wantonly to destroy. Some logs lay scattered about, charred by contact with the fire which had burned in his chimney, but smouldering now for lack of kindred timbers to kindle them. His trunk had been blown to fragments and its contents so widely scattered that he did not bother to gather them together.

"The quartermaster will fit me out again," he thought, "and first of all he must provide me with a clean shirt. That shell over at Grayson's spattered this one with Virginia mud till it isn't fit even for the washtub."

Then dismissing all such thought of himself from his mind, he went to the quarters of a brother officer in search of pen, ink, and paper,

his own supplies of stationery having been utterly destroyed.

"I haven't anything better than some soft, cotton-made stuff, sold by the sutler," said his brother officer. "He calls it foolscap, and it's all of that. It has fibres enough in it to make a rope that would do to hang yourself by, if you were of a suicidal persuasion. The pen cuts clear through it at about every third inch, but if you're careful you can make your writing fairly legible. I find such paper valuable, because when I'm writing an official report of any kind and come a point where I'd rather not be too explicit, I've only to bear on the pen a little in order to cut through the paper and make things utterly illegible. You can have half a dozen sheets of the stuff if you like, Ned, and all that you don't use for writing purposes will come handy in cleaning the red mud off your boots. It's bully for that sort of thing. Then again it's great for writing checks on. You see, with a very little care you can write a check on this paper which the devil himself couldn't make out sufficiently to tell whether the figure work corresponded with the written work. So what happens? Without the smallest reflection on your credit the bank throws the check out for 'uncertainty,' and you have at least ten c.

fifteen days in which to make your account good."

Burton, whose bank account was in no need of such support as this, laughed gently as he took a sheet or two of the foolscap from his comrade's hands. He settled himself behind a tree, by way of avoiding such interruption as a vagrant minie bullet might bring, and wrote a letter to Agatha. He was unused to the nicer conventions of life, and his habit of mind was blunt and direct. But he was by nature and instinct a gentleman, and in whatever he did there was a sincerity that meant far more than the suavities of formal speech or writing. This is what he wrote:

"Agatha, dear—if I may call you so—I have some things that I must tell you

"I have lost my mother, and I am absolutely alone in the world. I have some distant relatives, but they are nothing to me. I never saw any of them, and not one of them has ever cared to make acquaintance with my mother or with me. Practically, therefore, I have no kinsmen anywhere, nobody to whom I care to give any part of the considerable wealth that circumstances have recently made mine.

"I have been and am sorely distressed to think of the deprivation you and yours are suffering, and of the impoverishment that the

end of this war is likely to bring upon you.

"I have made my will giving everything I have on earth to you, in case of my death, which is an event likely to happen at any moment. But what if it does not happen? You Virginians are so heroically proud that it is difficult for me to devise a way of meeting that condition. This I will do, and I want you to know how resolutely I mean to do it. I shall go to you, if I am alive when the war ends, and I shall ask you again to be my wife. If you refuse, which is your right, of course, then I shall place in your lap—even if I have to throw them there—papers conveying to you everything I have in the world. If you refuse to accept the gift it will make no difference in my course. In that case I shall retain my commission in the army, utterly abandoning all my financial holdings, as no longer mine but yours, to use or not as you please. If you say yes to my suit, I shall get out of the army as quickly as possible, and it will be the greatest joy of my life to rehabilitate the fortunes of Warren House.

"There! I've told you what is in my mind. I pray you, do not balk my purpose even though you cannot accept my suit."

Having written this strange letter, Burton went with it to General Griffin.

"I have a letter here which I want to send through to Agatha Warren," he said.

"Will it bear flag-of-truce inspection?" asked the bluff, hard fighter.

"Yes, and no. It has nothing in it relating to military affairs—nothing that might forbid its transmission by flag of truce. But, General, it has much of—well, much that I don't want flag-of-truce officers to read and jeer at. I'd rather not send it at all than send it by flag."

"U—m!" said Griffin, meditatively, "I think I understand. You're in love with Agatha, and knowing her as I do I regard that as greatly to your credit. I'm a confirmed old bachelor, you know, but—well, I have a tender sympathy with a wholesome love affair. If you will give me your word of honor as a gentleman and a soldier, that your letter contains nothing that should be contraband—"

"I give you my word of honor as to that, freely," interrupted the young man.

"Very well, then. Seal it and leave it in my hands. I'll see to it that it shall be posted at some postoffice within the Confederate lines."

"How will you manage that, if I may ask?"

"I'll give it to Blake with orders to mail it."

"Do you trust Blake?"

"Trust him? No. How the devil can I trust a professional liar, traitor and scoundrel? He's a spy on both sides. That's why the rebels let him come into our lines and we let him go into theirs. Of course we don't trust him, but I manage to keep a rope always around his neck, and when I give him that letter to mail, I'll intimate my purpose to sling the rope over the limb of a tree and draw it taut if by any chance the missive is tampered with or if it fails to reach its destination promptly. He knows I can hang him whenever I please, and he knows I'll do it without waiting to say grace if he doesn't do what I tell him to do. Your letter will go through all right. He has no eager desire to swing from a limb while the Virginia buzzards pick his bones."

CHAPTER III

AGATHA MEDITATES

When Agatha received Burton's letter, she was busily engaged in devising those makeshifts of economy which Confederate impoverishment compelled. She still had two or three wounded Confederates for her guests, and in that early springtime, when vegetation had scarcely begun to grow, she was hard pressed to provide them with something to eat. With the assistance of Uncle Ezra—an old and experienced negro night prowler—Bob had managed to secure a 'possum, and that would serve as a piece de resistance for dinner. For vegetables she must depend upon the scanty store of potatoes, turnips, and dried peas—a species of field bean universally called "peas" in Virginia.

For bread there was nothing available but corn pone. The flour supply was exhausted, and, as the cows and chickens had all gone to feed the army, there was neither milk nor eggs left with which to convert the corn meal into

any more toothsome dish than pone. If there had been a supply of butter the pones would have tickled the most exacting palate. As it was, the Confederate soldiers were abundantly satisfied with their fare and it was Agatha alone, who, in her supersensitive hospitality, suffered because of the meagreness of the fare.

But chiefly she was not concerned about that. Bob had utterly worn out his shoes in his ceaseless trampings in search of fish, 'possums and other precarious food supplies, and Agatha was in sorely distressed apprehension lest he lame himself for want of soles to his wornout footgear. During a search through the lumbered storeroom she had come upon part of a calf skin and some pieces of sole leather and out of these she was trying to persuade the negro shoemaker of the plantation to fabricate a pair of "stitch-down" shoes for the boy. The shoemaker declared it impossible, protesting that there was not leather enough.

In the midst of her perplexity one of the Confederate convalescents joined her. When she had told him of the difficulty, he, being a man of mechanical ingenuity, made some measurements, and turning to the shoemaker said:

"You can get him a pair of stitch downs out of that if you make one of them wrong side

out—one with the inner and the other with the outer surface of the leather exposed. I don't reckon Bob will care much for a little irregularity like that, Miss Agatha."

"Certainly not. He'll be right glad to get a pair of shoes on any terms. Thank you, Sergeant. Will you show Moses how to do it?"

"No. I'll do it myself. I'm no shoemaker, but I find I can do most things pretty well if I make up my mind to do 'em. You see, Moses might spoil your piece of leather, so I'll cut the shoes myself and let Moses sew them together. It'll take a little piecing and patching, but I'll manage it somehow."

It was at that point that Burton's letter was placed in the girl's hand. She recognized the handwriting on the envelope, and, flushing deeply, excused herself, after thanking the sergeant for the service he had volunteered to render.

The sergeant instantly determined to make the shoes throughout with his own hands. In a distant and consciously hopeless way he had fallen in love with his young hostess, precisely as every other young man did who came within the magnetic field of her fascination. Personally he knew he was not in the same social plane with her. No thought of wooing her would ever enter his mind, but he loved her as

one may worship a star, and he was grateful for the privilege of doing even the humblest service in her behalf.

The reading of the letter filled Agatha with complex and conflicting emotions. She was very tenderly touched by Burton's consideration of her and by his devotion. She would have been more or less than a woman otherwise, and Agatha Warren was neither more nor less than that noblest work of God, a woman. She loved Ned Burton, though she had never admitted the fact even to herself. How could she admit it now, when he was a soldier under arms and making war with all his might upon the only country she knew as her own—Virginia?

She resented his presumption in writing to her at all, and still more bitterly she resented his presumption in daring to pity the distresses she and her loved ones were suffering for love of Virginia and thinking to relieve them with money.

But as she grew calmer of spirit and read the letter for the second and third time, she was forced to see that there was neither trace nor taint of presumption in it or in the impulse that had inspired it.

"It is just dear, good, generous Ned Burton," she said to herself. "He could not be

impertinently presumptuous if he tried. He knows so little of the conventions and cares so little about them when they stand in the way of his great-hearted impulses, that I have wronged him in calling him presumptuous even in my thought. He has simply obeyed his generous impulse in writing to me in that way, blundering on toward the object he had in mind, and—blundering only because of his great, earnest, soul-controlling intensity of purpose. Of course, I can never accept a dollar of his money as a gift. I would starve first, yes, and more than that, I would see the others starve—father and mother and Arthur and even little Betty and Bob—before I would do that. But I mustn't let that blind me to the generosity of his wish to give it in such a way as to compel me to take it."

She sat there for half an hour thinking things that may not be reported here, and all the time holding the open letter in her hands. At last she turned to it again and read it once more. Then she said out loud, there being nobody by to hear:

"I reckon he certainly does love me, and I'm right glad of that."

She checked the vagrant thought lest it lead her whither she was not minded to go.

CHAPTER IV

A LITTLE MATTER BETWEEN FRIENDS

For nearly ten months the siege of Petersburg had lasted. Once during the summer of 1864 General Lee, with extraordinary daring, had detached a part of his force, in spite of the fact that Grant's army so greatly outnumbered his own, and had sent it under Early to cross the Potomac, invade the North and threaten Washington. His hope was thus to compel Grant to withdraw a considerable part of his force from Petersburg and Richmond, and send it North for the defense of the Federal capital. He had successfully played that game of grand strategy twice before. He had, by that device, compelled McClellan, with his hundred and twenty odd thousand men, to withdraw from his position, threatening to Richmond, and go to the defense of the Federal capital. By the same device he had rid Virginia of Federal troops after the battle of Chancellorsville. He hoped now to repeat the

performance, and doubtless he would have done so but for the common sense of General Grant. That great commander indulged in no illusions. He was not an imaginative man. As Sherman one said of him, "He didn't bother himself over things that might or might not be happening somewhere out of sight." He did not exaggerate his enemy's resources, as McClellan habitually did. He knew how many men there were in the defenses at Washington, and how many more could be summoned thither without the withdrawal of brigades or divisions from his own force. He knew that these were sufficient for the defense of the capital, and so he declined to participate in the panic there or to weaken himself in its behalf. He had three men to Lee's one, but he needed them all in aid of his fixed purpose, which was to destroy the fighting force of Lee's army. So he counseled Washington to take care of itself with the ample forces it had at command, and himself went on with his work.

Having a greatly superior number of men, he decided to stretch Lee out to attenuation by continually extending his lines to the left, south and southwest of Petersburg. He had navigable watercourses behind him and a railroad well hidden from Confederate view. He was free to concentrate any force he pleased at any

point on the fifty-mile line at any time he pleased, without the possibility of discovery by his adversary, and by his continual extension of his well-manned lines to the south and southwest, he could compel his enemy to attenuate his line of defense to the easily breaking point over every mile of the stretching.

His strategy was simple and effective. He planned, when the spring should come and the roads harden, to concentrate an overwhelming force somewhere on the southern part of Lee's lines, break through and compel the evacuation of both Petersburg and Richmond, with the certainty that during Lee's enforced retreat, he could keep his forces so well forward as to beat the Confederates back toward James River, cutting off all hope of supplies and rendering impossible their retreat to a new defensive line on the Roanoke.

The time was now fast ripening for the execution of this strategic programme. The spring was at hand. The roads were hardening sufficiently for the use of artillery and wagon trains. Everything would soon be in readiness.

In the meanwhile General Lee was not in the least degree blind to the situation. He saw clearly that with his line attenuated to the vanishing point, with his works defended

by no more than one man to every five or ten feet, he could not repel any assault his adversary might concentrate to make.

He went to Richmond, therefore, and presented an alternative plan. He asked first that the government should give him the negroes as soldiers—three, four or five hundred thousand stalwart young men. His plan was to officer them with white men, and so to distribute them as effectually to defend the works in front of Petersburg and Richmond, while with the rest of his veterans, reinforced by a hundred thousand or so of the sturdy young negroes, he should again cross the Potomac, menace Washington, and either capture that city, compelling peace or force Grant to withdraw his army from Richmond and Petersburg to fight a defensive campaign north of the Potomac.

That proposal was negatived upon sentimental grounds!

Lee's alternative plan was to evacuate Richmond and Petersburg while a road of retreat was still open to him, retire to the Roanoke River, form a junction with Johnston, and fight the issue to a finish in one great Armageddon battle, in which the armies of the Confederacy should either destroy their adversaries in desperate conflict, or be themselves destroyed.

That proposal also was negatived on sentimental grounds.

On sentimental grounds Lee was denied the obviously available means of defending Richmond, and at the same time on sentimental grounds he was forbidden to abandon that defense and retire to another and more defensive line.

He went back to his tent and awaited the end with that calm self-possession which was the dominant trait of his character. He knew that whenever Grant should choose to concentrate and hurl a sufficient force against any part of his lines, he must inevitably break through them. He knew that as soon as the roads should harden in the spring, Grant would do this. He knew that if he did it on the southern end of the line, as he very certainly would, the successful retreat of the Army of Northern Virginia would be impossible. The enemy would be present in overwhelming numbers, not only on its flank, beating it back upon James River, in which direction there was neither a food supply nor a thoroughfare, but also in front, blocking progress in that direction.

The great Confederate General had no choice, however. The government at Richmond denied him the only reinforcement that

was possible, and it forbade him to retire while there was yet time, from a position that was hopelessly untenable without that reinforcement. There was no course open to him but to sit still and await the inevitable end.

The fact that he had asked for the arming of the negroes was a matter of hourly discussion in the army, and it was perverted news of that that Blake had carried into the Federal lines and reported to Ned Burton.

General Grant did not believe that the negroes were to be enlisted and armed. He knew the temper of the Confederate Government too well for that. Still, as he years afterwards said to the writer of this chronicle, he thought there was a sufficient possibility of that sort of thing to prompt him to hasten his plans. To this writer he declared that but for his fear that half a million negroes might be added to Lee's fighting force he would not have begun his final and decisive campaign until at least two weeks after the time at which he in fact began it.

For a week or two before the actual beginning of the campaign General Grant set his lieutenants at work, feeling of the several Confederate positions to ascertain how strongly or otherwise each was held.

In one of these tentative contests General Griffin was pitted against his old friend Gen-

eral Warren. His attempt was to drive Warren from a rather low-lying and not easily defended position. The moment the assault was made Warren abandoned the defensive, rushed forward and hurled his whole force impetuously upon Griffin. As by the swirling onset of a whirlwind, he forced his adversary back and ended by establishing his division upon the strong line of hills that Griffin had occupied in the morning.

"Confound old Buck Warren," Griffin said to one of his staff, that night after finishing his report of the affair, "there never was any doing anything with him. I had him whipped before the fight began but, damn it, he didn't recognize the fact and so it did me no good. It's my bad luck to be always running up against him and his hot headed obstinacy. When he stands on the defensive, I can't drive him. I suppose that's because you can't drive a man who won't go. When he takes the offensive—well, you saw to-day how very offensive he can make himself. He's the dearest old boy you ever knew, but he's the devil's own to fight. In private life and among friends he's gentler than a woman, but when a fight is on he's an incarnated demon of determination. Do I know him personally? Well, I should say so. He's the best friend I ever had in my life.

We fought together in Mexico—and what a fighter he was! I'll bet dollars to doughnuts the Mexicans remember him. As for hospitality, he'd go broke to make you comfortable if you were his guest, and he'd ask you to dinner with perfect self-confidence if he had only corn pone and buttermilk to offer you. He's a prince among men, and he has the most beautiful family life I ever saw. Every member of the household loves every other member of it. Each is constantly striving to make all the others happy and comfortable, and yet they are all as elaborately courteous to each other as if they were distinguished strangers. I've seen Buck Warren rise from his place at table when his little daughter Betty entered the room, and pass round a dozen guests to seat her gallantly."

"He's fat, I suppose?" asked the officer to whom Griffin was talking.

"Fat? No. He's tall, long boned, and as lean as a trooper's horse at the end of a raid. Why did you think him fat?"

"Oh, I've a sort of conviction that all good-natured people are fat."

"You never made a bigger mistake in your life. Nearly all the Virginians are lean, and there were never better-natured people in the world—unless they're in a fight. Then they know how to be ugly in the last degree. But

the moment the fight is over they're as kindly as angels, particularly toward a conquered enemy. They never bear grudges. If they have a grievance, they fight it out instead of nursing it, and when they have fought it out they forgive everybody concerned. The Virginia coat-of-arms, to be properly representative, ought to bear two legends instead of one. Under 'Sic Semper Tyrannis' ought to be the words 'Shake hands and come to dinner.' Damn it, that's the worst thing about this war. It hurts me to fight these Virginians. I rather liked fighting Greasers and Indians, but fighting Virginians seems like hitting one's mother in the face—only one's mother wouldn't hit back and the Virginians do.

"I meant to fool Warren to-day, but, as usual, he didn't give me time. He rushed us so quick that I couldn't play the trick. You see, I meant to make him think my main attack was to be on his right, while in fact I intended to assail his left, but he didn't bother to guess—or 'reckon,' as he would say—what I meant. He just called on his Virginians, every man of whom would rejoice to die for him, to follow him, and before I could develop my attack I was standing on the defensive and giving ground inch by inch to a force less than half as great as my own.

"Well, anyhow, I've fulfilled my orders. They were to 'feel the enemy and report.' I've 'felt' the enemy—Buck Warren took care of that—and I've reported. So my duty is done."

At that moment a negro servitor entered and reported that General Griffin's supper was ready.

"I wish Buck Warren could share it with me," he exclaimed. "I'll bet he hasn't anything better than a hardtack biscuit to eat tonight—and may be he hasn't even that."

Burton very heartily echoed his chief's generous wish. But war is war.

CHAPTER V

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The time was at last ripe for Grant to make an end of the war, and with his customary common sense he set about the task in the right way. Assured of his ability to break through Lee's lines of defense and compel the Confederates to retreat, he called Sheridan from the Valley of Virginia to take command of a pursuing force. Then, on the thirty-first of March he assailed Lee's lines south of Petersburg with a tremendous force, and after three days of such fighting as had rarely been seen on earth before, he succeeded in breaking his way through the obstinate Confederate defense.

There was nothing for Lee to do but evacuate Richmond and go into retreat—a manifestly hopeless retreat it would have been but for the masterful genius of the great man who conducted it. It was hopeless in fact and in spite of Lee's genius, from the start, but Grant

was too wise to regard it in that way. He knew his adversary and he respected him, as one great soldier respects another. He knew that technically he had the Army of Northern Virginia destroyed, but he knew also that that army, so long as any fragment of it remained, would fight tremendously. He knew that every time he assailed it—in spite of his superior numbers—he took the risk of a bloody beating. He knew it was not child's play, but stalwart men's work to encounter it, even in hopeless retreat. He knew that if any man on earth could extricate it from the web in which he had succeeded in entangling it, that man was Robert E. Lee.

Reckoning upon nothing too confidently, and respecting his great enemy in soldierly fashion, Grant set in operation every force he could in any wise command to press Lee back upon the James River to check his progress toward the Roanoke, and to destroy, if possible, all that remained of fighting force in the Army of Northern Virginia.

It was a retreat that that army made, but it was, from beginning to end, a hard-fighting retreat. At every step the Confederates were ready to turn about and give fierce battle to their adversaries. At every step they fought like full-fed men, though in fact they were not

fed at all. The country through which they retreated had been stripped to the skin. They had brought with them, from Petersburg and Richmond a scant half-day's ration upon which to make a week's march.

They might have been better supplied but for crass foolishness. Some idiot in Richmond destroyed the stores that were there, instead of giving them to the marching men. Some other idiot seized upon all the alcoholic liquors in the city and poured them into the gutters, where, as a matter of course, they took fire from the burning arsenals, with the result that the whole heart of the city was burned.

The men on march, some of them with half a day's rations and some with none, hurried on, starving, toward Amelia Court House, where General Lee had ordered a provision train to meet him.

Then came the one great, culminating crime of the war. To get that train out of the way, and to facilitate the flight of Jefferson Davis, the president of the Confederacy, that train-load of provisions for starving and fighting men was ordered by somebody—the writer does not know by whom—to run past Amelia Court House and dump its precious freightage in a Richmond car yard. As a result, when General Lee reached Amelia Court House with

his starving army there was not one ounce of food there, and there was no hope of food along the road that must be traversed.*

Nevertheless, those brave, heroic fellows—even more heroic in enduring than in doing—marched on, fighting on empty stomachs as gallantly as if they had been fully fed.

Sometimes a man would by good luck secure possession of an ear of hard corn. He would divide it with some comrade, and the two would munch it as if it had been the most de-

* After I had published a statement of this fact in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1874, Mr. Jefferson Davis sent his secretary, a Major Barksdale, if I remember rightly, to me to say that the statement was untrue and to ask me to omit it from the book into which my *Atlantic Monthly* articles were presently to be made. I said to Major Barksdale that if Mr. Davis would himself make written denial in as few or as many words as he might choose, I would print his denial in *fac simile*. The suggestion was declined. At that time I had in my possession a holographic letter from General Lee to John Esten Cooke, in which, in answer to a question from Cooke, General Lee confirmed the statement, saying that his confirmation of it was not to be used unless Mr. Davis should deny it. If Mr. Davis had given me the written denial I asked of Major Barksdale, it was my purpose to print in *fac simile* both the denial and General Lee's letter of confirmation, leaving the public to choose between those two as to veracity. As Mr. Davis declined to give me a signed denial, I feel free to relate the facts as confirmed by General Lee. —AUTHOR.

licious of viands. Sometimes—generally, in fact—there was no corn to be had, and then the men cropped grass as their horses did, except that they had hands with which to pluck it and put it into their hungry mouths. It was early April and there were no green things in the fields, but every stretch of woodlands that the starving men passed through was stripped bare of its buds and young leaves by men who had passed beyond the realms of relish into the domain of the pangs of hunger, where hunger means not merely the desire for food but the frantic, clamorous demand of every nerve and bone and muscle and blood vessel for permission to live.

But, starving as they were, and scarcely able to make one leg follow the other, those heroic fellows marched on, and whenever the call to arms came they trotted nimbly into line of battle to confront the foe with all their old-time resolution. They were as quick on trigger as ever, and they were even more indifferent to danger than they had been at any time during their four years of service. For what matters it to a man perishing of hunger if a well-aimed or a vagrant bullet puts an end to the agony of it all?

In the minds of those devoted men the whole thing ciphered itself down to this: "We are

in the hands of Mas' Robert Lee. Where he tells us go we will go. What he tells us to do, we will do. What he asks us to endure, we will endure. And we will make no complaint."

Probably so heroic an example of devotion was never given on earth before or since. Certainly starving men never before or since stood up to their soldierly duty more resolutely; and on the morning of the surrender, if Lee had asked it of them, his starved veterans stood ready to make the most determined fight of their lives.

CHAPTER VI

A LITTLE PERSONAL TRUCE

Somehow—only the angels will ever know how—the remnant of the Army of Northern Virginia managed to make its bloody way to Appomattox Court House. Many thousands of its men had fallen by the wayside and died there of exhaustion and starvation. Some, in despair, had gone to their homes. A few thousands had held out, and these were the best men of all. To them weariness meant nothing more than a new reason for resolution; starvation was a negligible incident; battle, when it came, as it did at almost every step, was a matter of routine duty. These men regarded all circumstances as a part of the inevitable and reconciled themselves to whatever happened.

They were soldiers under Robert E. Lee. So long as he should require them to march, they would march. Whenever he ranged them in line of battle and directed them to fight, they fought. Their devotion to him was absolute, unquestioning, unflinching, limitless.

Lee understood the stagger of starvation with which they went into every fight. He read aright the gaunt, hollow-cheeked faces that confronted him whenever he looked at his devoted men. He knew that with them it was "do or die," and that they would go on doing until they died.

But he knew also that their physical capacity to do was near its end. He knew that he must feed those men or see them sink in their tracks in helpless exhaustion. Their souls were desperately resolute still, but their bodies were wasting away so fast for want of nourishment that presently their very fingers would be unequal to the task of pulling a trigger. He must either get food for them or he must surrender them into the hands of a generous enemy and ask that enemy to feed them. If he could feed them, the chance of tremendous battle would still be theirs, and, small as their numbers were, they preferred that to surrender.

To meet these conditions Lee had ordered a wagon train to move from Lynchburg and meet him at Appomattox—a wagon train freighted with food for his starving men. If that train should arrive in time, the Army of Northern Virginia. worn now to a frazzled fragment of its former self, would put up the

most determined fight it had ever made, and either win for itself the right to go on fighting, or perish there on the hills and in the valleys around Appomattox.

History hung in the balance. The weight of a hair in one scale or the other might decide an epoch-making issue. It all depended upon the arrival or non-arrival of that wagon train.

It was under these conditions that the two contending armies faced each other near Appomattox Court House and within a brief distance of Warren House on the eighth of April, 1865. The Warren plantation was still within the Confederate lines, but by reason of the irregularity of the lines it could be reached from General Lee's headquarters only by a detour of fifteen miles or so.

Agatha Warren did not understand this, and knowing that her father and brother and many others of her friends were near at hand, she stripped Warren House of provisions, packed a hamper full of sandwiches, and set out, with Sappho for escort, to minister to the needs of her starving kinsmen.

A Federal picket had pushed itself, for purposes of observation, to the big spring at the foot of the great sycamore tree under which little Bob had given Ned Burton his fish breakfast at the time of his escape from captivity.

Corporal De Peyster, in command of the picket post, had sent his three or four men to various points round about from which they might observe the enemy, and so he remained himself in solitary possession of the place.

His canteen being well-nigh empty, he carelessly laid his gun down and proceeded to replenish his water supply from the bubbling spring that flowed from beneath the roots of the great tree as if it had been the tree itself that yielded the current.

At that moment Zack Biggs, a lank, starving and ragged Confederate, who had been "born and raised" in that region, and who therefore knew the locality of the spring, stumbled down over the bank, intent upon distending his stomach with water in default of anything more solid.

In his blundering descent he came face to face with De Peyster, and instantly the two —trained campaigners that they were—ensconced themselves behind trees and each stood ready to fire the moment the other should show himself. But each was too wary to show himself, and besides there was a certain comradery between soldiers in the opposing armies when they met thus individually and not in battle which made each reluctant to fire at the other. To kill each other in battle was a part of the

programme, but to shoot at each other in cold blood when they met individually seemed too much like murder to please them. So a little dialogue occurred between Corporal De Peyster and Zack Biggs, which may be repeated here:

Zack: "Say, Yank, I reckon you're my prisoner."

De Peyster: "I guess not. I guess you are mine. Our pickets are out in front."

Zack: "Say, Yank, I'm awfully dry, an' I don't want nothin' but a swig from that spring —jest to fill out my belt like. Why can't you and me make a little truce on our own account, instid o' goin' a gunnin' fer one another? 'Twon't affect the issue of the campaign in the least little bit of a degree. Is it a go?"

De Peyster: "Yes, it's a go, Johnny. When I count three we'll both lay down our guns, and we won't pick 'em up again till the truce is over, and we'll both play fair. Are you ready?"

Zack: "Yes, ready."

De Peyster: "One, two, three! You didn't drop your gun."

Zack: "Neither did you. Say, let's play fair. Lean your gun up agin' the tree an' I'll do the same. There. That's right. Now stretch out your right hand an' I'll stretch out my left so

as we can both see. That's right. Now we'll chassey off, leavin' our weepins behind us, an' we'll be good friends while the truce lasts."

As soon as Zack was sure that De Peyster was beyond reach of his gun he called out:

"Now stand there, Yank, while I fill up my belt and my canteen, and it'll be all square between you an' me. Ef you ever happen down this way after the United States surrenders to the Confederacy and begs Mas' Bob Lee for generous terms, jes' you hunt up Zack Biggs's place, over beyond that there hill, an' you'll be welcome to the best bacon an' greens they is in all this neck o' the woods. I say, have you got any whiskey?"

De Peyster: "Yes, there's my flask," tossing it to the other, who nimbly caught it and eagerly absorbed somewhat more than half its contents. "I say, Zack, I'm going to accept that invitation. When the war is over, no matter which side wins, I'm going to come down here just to eat bacon and greens with you and be friendly. I suppose you'll give me buttermilk, too. I'm fond of that."

Zack: "Well, you'll have to wait awhile for that. You see our cows is all took for rations, an' I reckon it'll be quite a while before we get a new supply."

De Peyster: "Say, Zack, you fellows must be

starving. What have you had to eat since you left the trenches of Petersburg?"

Zack: "Now look here, Yank, from Bull Run until now I've been fightin' you fellows, an' I ain't never onc't done nothin' prejudicial to good order an' military discipline. I ain't a goin' to begin now. I ain't a goin' to tell you nothin' about our rations. I don't mind sayin' that we don't often have roast turkey an' plum puddin' an' ice-cream for dinner, but beyond that I'm statin' nothin' whatsomever."

De Peyster: "Well, anyhow, I've got two hardtack biscuit in my haversack, and a little raw beef. Perhaps you won't mind eating the biscuit, and when you get back to camp you can cook the beefsteak."

Zack (As the provisions are held forth and hungrily seized): "Cook it? Well, I reckon not. Cookin' wastes a lot. We eat what we git jest as we git it."

And with that he devoured the bit of tough beef and the two crackers as greedily as any famished dog might have done.

It had been six days since Zack had tasted aught of food except grass and the buds stripped from forest trees. But when De Peyster again said something suggesting the starved condition of the Confederates, he answered:

"Look a' here, Yank, with us fellers rations don't amount to nothin'. Ain't we got dead oodles an' scads o' terbaccer? An' ain't terbaccer better'n rations to fight on? Still, I reckon we was hungry enough when we was a fightin' you all down Farmville way yes*tidd*y to 'a' swallowed you whole, ef they hadn't 'a' been so confounded many of you."

At that moment two shots were heard, and both men jumped to their feet.

De Peyster: "No tricks now, Johnny. I'm watching you."

Zack: "Oh, don't get excited. It don't pay. Them shots means as how some o' our fellows has seed a molly cotton tail an' got him."

De Peyster: "What's a molly cotton tail?"

Zack: "Why, a ole hare, you durned ignorant Yank—what you all calls a rabbit. A ole hare, you know."

At the moment De Peyster heard one of his sentinels formally challenging, and turning to the Confederate he said:

"Some of our people are coming, and you haven't any truce with them. You'd better vamoose."

"All right," said Zack, "does our truce last till I git over the brow of that there hill yonder?"

"Yes—but you must hurry or I'll get into trouble."

"All right. Good-bye, sonny. I'm a feelin' better sence I got them crackers an' that thar meat into my innards. Good-bye."

A few minutes later there came to the spring three of Grant's generals, in search of some point of vantage from which to observe the enemy's lines and find out what they could of his strength, his position, and the distribution of his batteries.

General Griffin—bluff, case-hardened old campaigner that he was—was the dominant member of the group, and all three were eagerly intent upon such discovery respecting the enemy as might help in the tremendous work of war then going on.

CHAPTER VII

THREE QUERULOUS GENTLEMEN

The three general officers and their orderly, with their side-arms on and their trousers in their boots, stalked into the little glade where the great sycamore grew. Two of them hopped nimbly over the brook above, the brook into which the great spring poured its waters as a contribution to the comfort of the crawfish and the speckled trout that peopled the stream below but rarely ventured above the "big spring," as Bob Warren had found out by very diligent whipping of the limpid pools. Griffin, who regarded all obstacles with lordly disdain and marched straight toward his purpose scornfully heedless of anything that might stand in his way, walked through the spring and made no complaint when he came out on the other side that it had proved to be a good deal deeper than he had supposed, and that as a consequence his high cavalry boots were full of water. He had work to do, and a wetting meant nothing to him.

The two armies were very close to each

other, and the men on the lookout on either side were firing at every head they saw exposed above cover. There was a pretty constant stream of Confederate minie balls flowing over the little ridge in front, but a circumstance like that meant little to old campaigners like General Carr, General Harding, and their superior officer, General Griffin.

From the level of the ground round about the spring they could see little of the Confederate line. But the sycamore tree was a gnarled and twisted old monarch of the forest, and by reason of its deformities it was easily climbed.

"Here, Carr," said Griffin, as soon as he saw how the land lay, "you're the youngest of us and the nimblest, and you are of the lean kine. You haven't an ounce of superfluous flesh on you. You'd make a good Confederate, only your leanness would shame even the rebel commissary department. Climb the tree, won't you, and tell us what you see."

While Carr was climbing, a little dialogue occurred between the three.

"This thing can't last much longer," said Harding. "They simply can't go on fighting."

Griffin: "I say, Harding, I'm getting tired of that utterance of yours. It's precisely what you said in 1861 before Bull Run; you said it

again with emphasis in 1862, just before Lee wallopped McClellan up like a baby in a blanket. You were sure of it the day before Pope got his perfectly beautiful licking at the second Manassas. You've been saying it ever since, and besides being tired of it, I'm beginning to be superstitious about it."

Harding: "Superstitious? How do you mean?"

Griffin: "Why, every time you've said it the Rebs have given us a licking by way of mocking at your prophecy, and every time the licking has been exactly proportioned to the confidence of your prediction."

Harding: "Well, but they're utterly worn out now, and so badly starved they simply can't fight."

Griffin: "Well, I call their little performances on this retreat a singularly good imitation of fighting, and its my opinion they've got a lot more of it in 'em. If they manage to get some supplies about now, why, our grandchildren will have to finish this campaign for us."

Harding: "You'd better suppress that bull fiddle voice of yours, Griffin. Their pickets aren't more than a quarter of a mile away, are they, Carr?"

Carr (from the tree): "I can't see. There's a fringe of timber over there, and—"

At that moment half a dozen bullets whistled uncomfortably close to Carr's ears, and he gave what Griffin characterized as a lively demonstration of youthful nimbleness in his hurried descent.

"I imagined they weren't far away," said Harding. "Did they pink you, Carr?"

"Not a scratch, but, well, I don't think a life insurance company would choose that tree top as a place of residence for its policyholders."

"Could you make out whose force it is in our immediate front?" asked Griffin.

"Yes. I saw the headquarters flag—or what's left of it—it's Warren."

"Yes, of course it is," answered Griffin. "I ought to have known without asking. It's always Warren, Warren, Warren! Confound old Buck Warren! He's the dearest old fellow in the world, and I love him like a brother, but he's eternally in my way. Whenever I think I've got some easy job cut out for me Buck Warren is sure to turn up and complicate things by his confounded genius for doing the right thing at the right moment. He's the foxiest fellow I ever saw. I remember in Mexico —but this is no time in the morning for reminiscences. I'd give my commission just to outwit Buck Warren once before I cash in my checks. I've whipped him half a dozen times,

but, damn it, he didn't find it out and so it was no good. He just went on fighting, and presently the boot was on the other leg and I was the fellow licked."

"Yes" said Carr. "Every time we've managed to crowd him into a corner he's got his bull-dog teeth in the seats of our trousers. What a fight he did put up yesterday! By Jove, I never saw anything like it. Those hungry-eyed men of his looked as if they would like to broil us for breakfast, and we slid off the gridiron none too soon. But they're really starving now, and I believe starvation is the only thing on earth that can conquer them."

"That's it," said Harding. "That's what Buck Warren has pushed himself so far west for. He's here to connect with that wagon train that Blake says is on its way from Lynchburg. If he gets into touch with that this campaign isn't ended yet."

"No," answered Griffin. "We'll find it has just got itself on its legs. And the worst of it is we can't cut off the connection. I sent a strong detachment last night to intercept the wagons, but Buck Warren struck my men in flank and pushed them back and the wagons got by the critical point. There's no playing tricks on Buck Warren. He's up to every one of 'em. Do you know why we call him Buck? Buck is

a nickname for William, and as a matter of fact his name is John. But when he and I were lieutenants down in Mexico, with brevet volunteer rank of colonel and lieutenant-colonel, Warren used to do things that made the Mexicans call him something—I've forgotten the Spanish words, but they meant 'Billy goat,' and they called him that because he was in the habit of butting in head first. So we fellows got to calling him 'Billy goat' and then 'Billy' and finally 'Buck' for short."

"As a bit of personal reminiscence," said Harding, sarcastically, "all that is very interesting. But just now our business is to 'bury Cæsar, not to praise him.' In other words, we've got to beat your very good friend Warren in the game of war, and we can do it easily."

"How?" asked Griffin.

"Why, simply by capturing that wagon train *en route*," answered Harding, a trifle nettled by Griffin's sententious use of the Socratic method.

"How?" asked Griffin again.

"Well," answered Harding, with more than a touch of impatience in his voice, "there are only two routes by which it can come. One is the trail over the Beaver dam bridge—"

"Don't swear, Harding," interjected Carr.

"That bridge is bad enough to be damned, of course, but—"

"Will you be quiet, Carr, and remember that this is serious? I was saying that train might come by the trail over the Beaver Dam Bridge, or it might come—"

Griffin: "By the North Road, out of our reach. Exactly. Go on, Harding."

Harding: "If we knew its route—"

Griffin: "If, if, if! Damn it, we don't know its route, and Buck Warren don't mean that we shall find out."

Harding: "Blake may bring us some information as to that."

Griffin: "Blake! Who ever heard of his finding out anything we really want to know? How I'd like to hang that fellow!"

Carr: "So would I. Still he's sometimes useful to us, and he's risking his life, Griffin."

Griffin: "That isn't much. We're all risking our lives every second of every minute of every hour, and our lives are worth something, while his—but go on; what were you going to say?"

Harding: "If we could manage to make them send that wagon train by the Beaver Dam Bridge."

Griffin (sarcastically): "I'll send a note to Warren on the subject. I'll ask him to do just that, and of course he'll do it. He's the most

courteously obliging person you ever saw, and surely he wouldn't deny an old friend a little favor like that."

Harding: "Why not send a courier with delusive orders, and direct him to get himself captured?"

Griffin: "Rot and rubbish! Buck Warren knows that trick by heart. The last time I tried it he sent my courier back to me, fake despatches and all, with General Warren's compliments, and wouldn't I invent something new enough to give interest to the campaign. If you can invent a trick that will catch old Buck Warren napping, I'll give you my commission and set up a saw mill or some other little business for myself."

Carr: "You're a pessimist, Griffin."

Griffin: "Not a bit of it. A pessimist is a man whose breakfast objects to him as a familiar associate. I never in my life had the smallest sort of controversy with my breakfast. It is only that I know Buck Warren. The man isn't born who could put up a job on him. That's why Lee has sent him on ahead to receive that wagon train and escort it into the lines. Now of course false orders might deceive him, but how are you going to manage the capture of your courier in a way that won't arouse his suspicion? You know Lee has is-

sued standing orders to hang every man caught trying that trick."

Harding: "Yes, of course I know that, but still I think it might be done."

Griffin: "How?"

Harding: "I don't know, but—"

Griffin: "We might label the despatches 'absolutely genuine'; I confess I hadn't thought of that. The Rebs aren't looking out for Yankee tricks—oh, no. They're a confiding, innocent, unsuspicious crew—especially Buck Warren."

Harding: "Still, I insist that if we could make them believe we were present in force on the northern road and intending to attack the train there, they would take the Beaver Dam trail and we could ambush them there."

Griffin: "True. Absolutely true, and brilliant beyond measure. But why not make them forget to bring their guns and their ammunition with them the next time they advance to give us battle? That would ease up our job."

Harding (nettled): "Oh, it's easy enough to find fault and sneer, but what good does it do? Why don't you suggest something?"

Griffin: "For the simple reason, Harding, that you keep me so busy explaining why your suggestions won't work. I don't get time to think out any of my own."

At that moment the sentry who had been posted in front called "halt" to somebody, and after a brief parley he reported the presence of a Confederate officer bearing a flag of truce. Griffin gave orders to let him pass, and a moment later young Lieutenant Arthur Warren, accompanied by a long-limbed Confederate, Bill Peavy, presented himself and saluted in formal fashion.

"A message from General Lee," he said. "He bids me say that his friend and yours, General John Warren, is suffering from fever —chiefly due to lack of food and sleep. General Lee insists upon a few days' rest for him. The Warren House—General Warren's home —is only four miles away, but if he must go round your picket lines it will mean a detour of fifteen miles in the hot sun. And in General Warren's condition that would probably mean death to him. General Lee asks for General Warren the courtesy of a pass through your picket lines to his home, where his health may be cared for and his life saved, perhaps."

Harding (advancing): "Warren sick? Why, that's better news than the capture of a brigade. You just go back and tell General Lee that at this present moment we are not engaged in running a charity hospital."

Griffin (to Harding): "Do you advise me to

let the best friend I ever had in the world die for want of a little care?"

Harding: "I didn't say that."

Griffin: "Well, I'm glad you didn't, because I'd see you in—well, let us say hot water rather than do it. It's irregular, of course, but by the hotel bill I'm going to issue that pass if I'm cashiered for doing it. They say 'blood is thicker than water'; well, my recollection of the way Buck Warren rescued me from the hands of Yaqui savages in Mexico is thicker than molasses or mush or glue."

Then turning to Arthur he said, in formal, military fashion:

"Say to General Lee, sir, that, contrary to my own better judgment, I have yielded to the compassionate entreaties of my trusted officers and issued this extraordinary pass. I do so only upon condition that General Warren shall not know it was I who did it. He'd be sure I had gone crazy. Why sir, Buck Warren has given us more trouble than any ten other officers of his rank in your army."

Arthur: "Yes, sir, I know that. Thank you for the compliment."

Griffin: "Why, how do you know anything about it? What do you mean?"

Arthur: "General Warren is my father, sir."

Griffin: "The devil you say! Then you're

Arthur. How d'ye do. You've lost flesh since I saw you last. But all this is excessively irregular and unmilitary. Here's the pass. It will let him and two litter bearers pass inside our picket lines on the east and out again on the west or north. Hurry up, boy, and get Buck Warren into bed, and for heaven's sake keep him there. The longer the better for us, eh, Carr; eh, Harding?"

"Yes," answered Carr, as the young Confederate vanished over the hill, still bearing his flag of truce, which was in fact a comrade's shirt tail torn off to serve the purpose. "We sha'n't have to fight Warren, at any rate."

"Now don't be too certain of that, old fellow," said Griffin. "You don't know Buck Warren. He had yellow fever in Mexico and he had it mighty bad, but when the order to advance was given he was at the head of his men, and he never fought them better than he did then, with his eyes bulging half out of his head. He's sick all right, but if there's a fight on the tapis—pardon me, Carr, I believe you don't understand French—tapis means carpet, and I suppose grass is a good enough carpet for a fight, or weeds either for that matter—whenever there's a fight on, Buck Warren is pretty apt to be there. He'd get up out of his grave to attend to a matter like that, and so if

a fight is coming he's pretty likely to be in the thick of it."

Harding: "Well, anyhow, he's out of the way for the present, and there's a chance to work that false despatch scheme of mine."

Griffin: "Harding, if this war lasts for twenty or thirty years more, and you continue in active service for that time, I suppose you'll manage somehow to discover that there are a good many other rebel officers who are not altogether damned fools. Don't you see that what you suggest—"

Then, abandoning his sentence in mid-air, he turned to Carr and said:

"Come on, Carr. We've got to push our pickets closer to the enemy. We don't half know what he's doing or getting ready to do."

"I wonder why Blake doesn't turn up," said Harding. "He's serving in Warren's corps, and he agreed to meet us here this morning."

Griffin: "He'll be here, I suppose, if they haven't found him and hanged him." Then turning to his orderly and starting up the brook, he said:

"Orderly, jump the stream and follow us on the other side."

Harding, still sticking to his text, muttered:

"If we could manage to get a courier captured with misleading despatches on him—"

Griffin: "The devil of it is that we can't," and without further attention to Harding's impracticable scheme, he stalked up the brook, with the others following him, with the purpose of studying the terrain and rearranging the picket posts.

CHAPTER VIII

AN INVITATION ACCEPTED

Almost immediately after the three generals passed up the brook with the design of reconstructing the picket lines, Ned Burton came to the spring, intent upon military business and accompanied by Corporal De Peyster and his four men:

Burton was scouting for the arrest of persons of whom glimpses had been caught in the woods and who were suspected of sinister designs. When war is on everybody is suspected of sinister designs. There is just this difference between peace and war: In peace everybody is supposed to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty; in war everybody not known and accounted for is supposed to be guilty until he is proved to be innocent.

The woodlands grew thickly over rocky and irregular ground; the underbrush was as thick as the hair on one's head. It afforded the most perfect cover imaginable for sharpshooters, scouting parties and the like. Accordingly, Burton was unusually alert to make bush

arrests, but he had only a corporal and a detail of four men under his command, and so he found his task difficult.

Presently there was a rustle in the bushes in front. He called out the military challenge, "Halt, who goes there?"

There was no response, but Burton had fixed his keen eye upon the spot from which the rustling had come, and his men had their guns at their shoulders, ready to fire into the bushes.

"Who goes there?" he called again imperatively. "Answer or we'll send a volley—who goes there?"

A woman's soprano voice responded:

"A friend. Don't fire!"

Then Agatha Warren emerged from the bushes, with her long sunbonnet so closely drawn down over her features as to conceal them completely.

"Good Lord, it's a woman!" exclaimed Burton. "And in another second I should have given the order to fire. Why are you sneaking around within our lines, madam? Come! Explain your presence."

"I was only taking my morning walk with my old mammy," the young woman answered. "You see, sir, we Virginia girls always take a walk soon in the morning, now that we haven't any horses, and can't ride any more."

"Well, madam," answered Burton, "the walking isn't very good around here just now. Whom have you with you hiding in the bushes back there?"

"Only my servant—my old mammy."

"Let her show herself. Come, no hiding."

In answer to that, Sappho emerged in all the truculence of an old Virginia house servant, accustomed to insist upon her way and to get it whether or not, and privileged to scold all comers at her own free will. She bore a split-hickory basket, carefully covered with an old counterpane. For speech she had this to say:

"Well, things is come to a purty pass, ef a young lady like my young missus can't take a mornin' walk in the woods 'thout bein' called to account by a lot o' you pesky Yankees a nosin' into her business, an' sayin' halt, an' threatenin' to shoot at her, jes' as ef she was a catamount or a cormorant or a conglomeration. Ain't yo' ashamed o' yourself, young man, to be treatin' young ladies in sich a way as that, an' them young ladies Warrens of Virginia at that?"

Burton did not catch the name. He was intent only upon his military duty; so he asked:

"What's in that basket?"

Without waiting for her mistress to reply, Sappho volunteered the answer:

"Dat's none o' yo' business, young man. You better go on huntin' fer hen roosts an' turkey pens to rob."

Agatha interrupted the flow of the negro woman's vituperative eloquence as soon as she could, saying:

"There is nothing in it, sir, except some lunch. You see, I'm out on a sort of picnic."

Burton: "What remarkable appetites you must have! There's more in that basket than any regiment in the Army of Northern Virginia has had to eat in a week. I'm sorry, my dear young lady, but my duty forbids me to let you pass into the Confederate lines with that supply of provisions."

Agatha: "You are not very courteous, sir—especially in your comments upon my appetite. We Virginians are accustomed, sir—"

Burton: "Yes, I know. Still, there's a limit, you know—really, young lady, I must not let you pass. Unknown gentlewomen have not the privilege of carrying contraband supplies through our lines, even in small quantities."

Agatha: "I'm not altogether an unknown gentlewoman to you, Lieutenant Burton. My name is Warren."

With that she pushed back her sunbonnet, letting it fall to her waist, and herself standing revealed.

"Agatha!" he exclaimed, starting forward as if to greet her, but suddenly remembering and restraining himself.

"I am Miss Warren, sir, if you please."

"Yes, of course. Pardon me. Continue your scouting rounds, Corporal De Peyster. I'll be responsible here."

As De Peyster disappeared over a ridge, Agatha turned to her serving woman and said:

"Come on, Sappho. I reckon we all had better be going on."

"I am very sorry, Miss Warren," said Burton, stepping into the path and facing her. "But really, under my orders, I cannot let that basket pass this point."

"What? Not even now that you know me?"

Burton: "No, you see the Confederate lines are just over the hill there—not more than a quarter of a mile away."

Agatha: "Thank you. That's just what I was looking for."

Burton: "So I guessed, and that's just why I can't let you pass."

Agatha, seating herself on the root of the tree. "Why, this is positively funny. A Warren not allowed to walk over her own father's land! For you know, Lieutenant Burton, this creek-land property belongs to my father. Of course, you didn't mean that. You couldn't

mean to break up my little picnic. Please, now, Lieutenant Burton."

Burton: "Miss Warren, I am a soldier. You are the daughter of a soldier, the sister of a soldier—you belong to a race of soldiers, every one of whom has been faithful to his duty even unto death. You know what my duty is in this case. You know how it distresses me to interfere in any way with your wishes. Spare me, Agatha! Spare me! I must do my duty as a soldier. You do not really want me to do otherwise."

"No!" she answered passionately. "Having taken upon yourself the duties of a soldier on the wrong side, having accepted a commission in an army organized to invade our land and destroy it, and make wreck of our peaceful lives, I suppose you must do your degrading duty even at cost of making war upon a girl who used to call you Ned, and of whom you once asked the greatest gift a woman can bestow. Yes, I suppose you must do your duty —even if it be to hang the woman you once professed to love."

"Once, Agatha? Once? Why, have you received none of my letters? Do you not know that my love for you—"

"Oh, yes, I did get a letter from you, just at the beginning of the war. I remember now."

The sly minx thought in this way to suggest, without saying, that Burton's latest missive, with its passionate pouring forth of all that was most intense in his nature, had never reached her, when in fact it rested every night under her pillow—placed there after a new and tearful perusal.

Suddenly she realized that her ruse was really the taking of an unfair advantage and that her pretense was not quite a truthful one. With an outburst of those impulses of truth and generosity which were characteristic of the Warrens as a race, and which had always dominated her own life, she broke forth:

"Listen, Ned. I must be candid with you. I received the letter you wrote me from the trenches around Petersburg, and I cherish it as a proof of—well, something I value very much. Still I resent it. It tells me in its very date line that you are the enemy of Virginia, doing all you can to destroy my native land and reduce her people to the condition of conquered subjects of a foreign power. I ought to hate you—I know that—but I don't hate you, and therefore I must hate myself and hold myself in contempt as a daughter of Virginia, untrue to her mother.

"No, don't interrupt, don't argue. I know all you would say. You would plead that the

United States is greater than Virginia and that the United States is my country. Very well. We Virginians don't admit that. We know Virginia existed before the United States did; we know Virginia created the United States; we know that the United States is in rebellion against Virginia in this war. Never mind that. I didn't mean to go into it. What I want to say after confessing my sin in not hating you as I ought to hate every enemy of Virginia, is that while I can never accept a dollar of the money you have planned to bestow upon me, I am nevertheless profoundly touched by your sentiment, and I shall always regard it gratefully. Now as to present concerns. My father, my brother—your friend Arthur—and others of those dear to me are over there, less than half a mile away. They are starving, as you very well know. I have stripped Warren House to pack that basket and carry them one meal before they die. Their life or death will have no effect upon the issue of the war. It means everything to me. I ask you, Ned Burton, to let me fulfil this mission of mercy, this errand of love. You have professed love for me. You have now your chance to prove it. How shall it be?"

"It shall be yes. Duty or no duty, conscience or no conscience, I am going to let you through

our lines with your sandwiches. There is always a higher law—the law of love, and I love you, Agatha."

"Thank you, Mr. Burton! Oh, you don't know how I thank you. You see we all aren't so well off now as we were when you were at Warren House. So when we heard the army was marching up this way, why we—well, we denied ourselves to fill that basket. You see, we didn't know you all would come up so close. What's that?"

Half a dozen shells and a shower of minie balls swept over the spot.

"Shelter yourself here by the root of the tree, Agatha," said Burton, anxiously. "I'll go and see what it means."

In personal disregard of the fire which continued in desultory fashion for a time, he sauntered up the hill and took observations from its crest. After awhile the firing ceased and he returned to the root of the tree, saying:

"Miss Agatha, something has happened. It is physically impossible for me to get you through to the ene— to your people's lines. General Lee has suddenly concentrated a hundred guns on that line of hills over there, and General Sheridan has pushed a column of fifteen or twenty thousand men in between Gen-

eral Griffin's lines and the enemy. They are so close that they can see if either winks across a camp fire. There is likely to be a fight at any minute now, and such a fight! You must return to Warren House. It simply won't do for you to stay here. We may be under a withering fire—you must hurry. But tell me. It is just possible—may I call on you this evening—to-night, you call it—if I can get leave?"

Agatha: "Why, I'd be disgraced in the community if anybody found out I had received a call from a Yank—I mean a Federal officer. Anyhow, it wouldn't be pleasant for you. You'd find things changed a heap, I reckon."

Burton: "The rose garden's still there, isn't it? I love that best because of associations and memories. And the roses must be blooming now."

Agatha: "Oh, yes, it's still there and the roses are there, but Mr. Burton—"

Burton: "Why not 'Ned?' Surely—"

Agatha: "I was going to say we've had to kill the robins and eat them. Isn't it a shame?"

Burton: "I suppose you never think of the time you planted my rose tree there—and—and of what we said to each other there?"

Agatha: "There are some things a girl

never forgets. Sorry I can't ask you to call. Good day, Mr. Burton."

Burton: "Then you've decided to forbid my call?"

Agatha: "I didn't say just that. Of course—"

Burton: "Then I'll call if I can get leave. It's awfully doubtful."

Agatha: "I reckon it must be. Good-bye—that is to say if you find you really can't call."

At that moment a sentinel call was heard in front, and a few seconds later Arthur Warren appeared, bearing a flag of truce—a white rag which was the last remaining fragment of his last enduring shirt.

No sooner had he shown General Griffin's pass, and saluted the obstructing Federal sentries, than Agatha saw and recognized him.

"Why, it's Arthur!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Buddie, dear!"

An embrace followed. Then Agatha said:

"Oh, Arthur, you're so thin! Of course your rations are short."

"No, they aren't sis," he answered. "You can't call rations short when there aren't any rations at all—short or long. Let me tell you, Aggie, I had half a hardtack when we left the lines at Petersburg. I gave it to a poor fellow who needed it a good deal worse'n I did, I

reckon. Anyhow, in spite of it, he died of starvation two days later."

"But what have you eaten since then?" asked Agatha, insistently.

"Oh, I've been all right."

"But what have you had to eat? Arthur, you must tell me!"

"Well, I caught a lizard a day or two ago, and you know the sweet gums are in full bud now, and—oh, well, I've fared sumptuously every day."

"Arthur, you're fibbing and you're starving. I've got some sandwiches here. Perhaps Lieutenant Burton will permit you to eat one or two of them."

Burton: "As many as he likes. Eat, Arthur, and we'll shake hands afterward. The eating's first in order."

Arthur: "Thank you, Ned. I really am a trifle peckish." As he said so, he swallowed one sandwich after another, almost without chewing, so famished was he.

"I say, Ned," he explained when the fourth sandwich was devoured and a swig from the spring had prepared the way for another, "I say, Ned, I'm here with a permit to take father through your lines to Warren House. He's asleep just now, so please don't wake him."

"Oh, Arthur, is father—" Agatha was interrupted in the midst of her question.

"No, sis. He isn't wounded. He's feverish and weak, and General Lee is a bit worried about him—that's all. You know he and General Lee served in Mexico together, and they're fond of each other. I wanted to go on and prepare mother, but the pass calls for 'General Warren and two litter bearers who shall not be above the rank of privates'; so I reckon you'd better hurry home."

With that he hungrily seized another sandwich, prostrating himself by the spring to drink while devouring it. As he did so the litter, bearing General Warren asleep, was brought to a bank near by and rested there while the bearers should devour a sandwich or two apiece and slake their thirst at the spring.

After looking at her father's wasted features, Agatha turned to Burton and said:

"Now that I have seen my father and Arthur and our boys, and now that I realize what you and your kind have brought them to, in the way of starvation and suffering, I withdraw my invitation. Perhaps you had better not come to Warren House to-night, even if you can get leave. Fighting's all right, and our men folks never shrink from that, as you've probably found out. But when it comes to

starving them to death just because you can't whip them in fair fight—why, it's another thing. No. Don't think of coming to Warren House, now or ever. Blood is thicker than water."

With an angry flirt of her skirt—fabricated from an old bedspread—the girl quitted the scene and set out on her homeward journey.

"I'm awfully sorry, Ned," said Arthur, grasping his old friend's hand. "You see, women take these things seriously. She'll get over it."

Burton: "I'm not sure that I want her to get over it. Sometimes I think—but that's treason. A soldier mustn't think."

General Warren, lying there on his litter while his bearers refreshed themselves, muttered uneasily in his sleep. Presently the uneasiness woke him, and seeing Burton he called out:

"Why it's Ned Burton, sure as a gun. Howdy, Ned. I'm right glad to see you. I reckon I was dreaming."

At the moment Burton and Arthur each held out a sandwich from Agatha's basket.

"Eat it, dad," said Arthur, "and I'll bring you some water in my hat to wash it down with."

"Yes, eat it," urged Burton, "and there are

three more in the basket. You must eat them all."

General Warren ate hungrily, though in Burton's presence he seemed disposed to conceal the extent of his hunger.

"Some of the provisions stolen from us, eh?" he asked. And before Burton could answer he added:

"You all think you've starved us out. Well, wait and see. The Army of Northern Virginia has got a great big fight in it yet, sir, as you'll find out when General Lee gets a good ready. Well, Ned, when we parted four years ago we didn't expect our next meeting to be like this. However, all this is temporary. When the independence of the Confederacy is acknowledged as a right won by arms—when Virginia takes her rightful place among the nations of the earth, I invite you to come to Warren House again, and be our guest as you were before. Drop in and spend a year with us."

"Thank you, sir; I'll be more than glad when I can be a guest at Warren House again. I'm very sorry to see you ill, sir."

"I'm not ill," answered the resolute old Virginia campaigner. "No man is ill, sir, who can dream of old Virginia razor-back ham with the relish I did while I was asleep on that litter."

"Still, General—" began Burton, but Warren cut him short.

"The only thing the matter with me, sir, is that General Lee has ordered me to go home and rest just at the most interesting period in the campaign. General Lee's orders must be obeyed, of course. Otherwise I should have missed the pleasure of this meeting with you, sir. Allow me to felicitate myself."

"Thank you, sir. I hope some day to renew my experiences of Warren House."

"You'll always find a welcome waiting you when you come to Warren House. Difference of opinion doesn't militate against friendship or hospitality. Now, then, Arthur, it's time for you to get back to your command. There may be a fight any minute, and, damn it, I can't be in it. But you can. Remember our motto, 'Trust in God and fight like hell cats.' Good-bye, son. I'll see you soon, and maybe they'll delay the next fight long enough to let me take a hand in it."

After Arthur had passed over the hill under escort into the Confederate lines, Burton said to General Warren:

"General, I met Miss Agatha here a little while ago—"

"You did? Then it's all arranged—"

"REMEMBER OUR MOTTO—'TRUST IN GOD AND FIGHT LIKE HELL CATS.'"

"No, General; we parted in something like anger—on her part, at least."

"Now, my dear boy," said the old Confederate, with a soothingly affectionate tone, "you mustn't let that trouble you. I remember the little confidence you reposed in me four years ago, and I made up my mind then that some day—after we whip you Yankees and establish our independence—I should have the honor of placing a dainty little hand in your strong one and saying: 'There, Ned, take her and be good to her, or, damn it, I'll kill you.' I'm still looking forward to that, Ned."

"But, General, she refuses to have anything to do with me. She—"

"My dear Ned, you're young and you've had very little experience with women. They fly off the handle that way, but they don't mean it. They change their minds a dozen times a day, but they really mean the same thing all the time. You must be patient. Just as soon as we whip you Yanks and clear Virginia of you, you must come to Warren House for a little visit and you'll find a way to settle things on a satisfactory basis. You see, you'll have my consent for a base of operations."

After a moment a thought struck the Virginian.

"I say, Ned, you're within four miles of

Warren House. Why can't you get a permit, or something—or run the blockade—and come over to-night to see us? I'll give you a return pass, and I'll see that our pickets don't trouble you as you come to us. Why can't you do the trick? It would be dramatic, romantic, Walter Scottish, and all that sort of thing. Do it, Ned! By Jove, it will be great. You see, I don't mind telling you, in confidence, that we sha'n't be ready to thrash you fellows till morning, and you can easily get back in time to take your part of the thrashing we're going to give you. Why, damn it, it's a regular Romeo and Juliet affair, and I've got enough red blood left in my veins, and enough iron in my blood, to rejoice in it. Say you'll be there!"

"I'll try my best, sir. If I'm not there it shall not be my fault."

"All right. We won't talk politics or war or anything of that sort."

As he spoke, General Warren staggered from weakness, and was caught by Burton and his bearers, Zack and Bill, who seated him again upon the litter, from which, in his impulsive enthusiasm over the Romeo and Juliet idea, he had arisen.

"Oh, it's just a little weakness," he said. "I'll soon be over it."

With that the starved, exhausted, wornout hero of indomitable endurance stretched himself upon the litter again for the rest that every muscle and nerve fibre of his body felt to be an imperative and immediate need.

CHAPTER IX

A WAR CHANCE

While Warren lay resting upon his litter the three Federal Generals, Griffin, Carr and Harding, returned to the little cove around the spring.

Griffin and Warren — old friends, messmates, comrades as they had been—were very nearly falling out at once. Warren, feeble as he was, kicked his litter into the bushes and, in response to Griffin's expression of regret that he was ill, called out:

"I'm not ill. Why, you dear old Bill Griffin, I was never in better shape to lick you some more in all my life than I am right now. If I'd known it was you who faced me, I'd have been on you with both feet at the earliest break of day. I'm not going home. I'm going back to my lines to lick you some more, Bill. Let's shake hands, anyhow. It may be for the last time."

Griffin: "You're ill, Buck. I don't deny that your absence from my front means more than the withdrawal of two brigades. But really,

old fellow, you're ill and you must go home and get well enough to fight us many times hereafter."

Warren staggered, and in spite of his heroic resolution, sank to the ground, saying, as he did so, "Sick? No, sir. Not so long as you've got two legs to stand on."

In another moment he had fainted, and his bearers, Zack and Bill, lifted him to the litter and stretched him upon it.

"Go at once!" commanded Griffin. "Get him home just as quick as you can, or he'll die on the road. What's the matter with you two lummaxes? Oh, starved, are you? Well, here!"

And seizing the haversack of one of his own men, he slung it over Zack's shoulder, saying:

"Feed yourselves out of that. And let me tell you, if you don't get Buck Warren home in safety, you needn't come back this way, for I'll hang both of you to a limb of that sycamore tree. Git!"

As the litter bearers moved away, Warren called out:

"Good-bye, Bill. The sight o' you has done me more good than a month's rest. I'll be back again in a day or two to whip you some more. I say, Bill, do you remember that time in Mexico when the greasers—"

The rest of his sentence was lost in the

bushes as the bearers of his litter hurried him away.

"Poor old fellow!" said Carr. "It seems a pity. But he'll never live to rejoin his command."

"Don't you worry," answered Griffin. "He's got more life in him than forty-nine cats. You don't know these tough, wiry Virginians. Why, last summer I had a charitable impulse to move forward with a squad and take possession of some Confederate field hospitals, because I heard their surgeons had left for fear of being taken prisoners. I'm damned if those sick and wounded fellows didn't rally and lick the life out of my squad. Fact. As for Buck Warren, well, let me tell you: Once in Mexico he had yellow fever and he had it mighty bad. I got leave to take care of him, and just as I was meditating on the details of his approaching funeral, a regiment of Mexican lancers galloped into the village. We had hardly any force there, but the boys did their best, and when I got out among 'em to help as much as I could, the first thing I heard was Buck Warren's voice calling on the men to charge. I'm damned if he wasn't there on the back of a mule, fighting like 'a hell cat'—that was always his motto. And, don't you know, it cured him? I tell you, we're not done with Buck Warren yet, and don't you make any mistake."

At the moment there was a little skirmishing in front, and Burton asked of Griffin:

"Shall I go to the picket lines? I may be needed there."

"No. There's nothing coming. It is only that the lines are drawn so close and the men are sleepy. They are firing to keep themselves awake. I don't suppose anybody in either army has had an hour's straight-away sleep for a week or more."

"I suppose not," answered Burton. "But, General Griffin—I—"

"Go ahead, Burton. What is it? You had something on your mind, and that's always bad for a soldier. Soldiers oughtn't to have any minds. Out with it."

"Well, I was only wondering. You see, General Warren is an old friend of mine, and his daughter, Miss Agatha—well, I may as well be frank with you—I love her and I've made my will, giving her everything I have in the world—it's a good deal of money—and—well, I'd like permission to call on her to-night, if I might. You see, Warren House is less than four miles away, and I've been invited not only by her but by General Warren."

For reply General Griffin said:

"I say, Burton; I don't know whether you're still a child or whether you're a natural born,

sublimated idiot. Anyhow, your request is so preposterous that only your good service in the past excuses it. Has anybody ever suggested to you that there's a war going on? Has it ever occurred to you that war has a tendency to interfere with and interrupt social intercourse? Did the meaning of a picket line ever impress itself on what you are pleased to regard as your mind? Did it ever occur to you that the officers of our army are, for the time being, at least, not engaged in maintaining social relations with the Confederate people? Have you happened to hear that Julius Cæsar is dead, and that Pompey is no more?"

Burton sat still for a while before answering. Then he said:

"I suppose I deserve your sarcasms, sir. But in preferring my request I meant no disloyalty. I think you know enough of my service to believe that."

"Why, of course I do, Ned. Damn it, I didn't mean—here's Blake at last. Now we'll find out something. Burton moved up the hill in order that he might not hear.

Blake was in his Confederate uniform, and he knew he must be back within the Confederate lines within half an hour. He spoke hurriedly but with precision. What he had to say was this:

"It's actual starvation now. If Lee's men don't get something to eat before to-morrow morning, they'll never put up another fight. They simply can't. They haven't the strength. Everything depends on that wagon train. If they get that to-night, they'll give you the most tremendous fight in history to-morrow morning. If you can capture that train, they simply must surrender. By way of meeting it they are extending their right, and General Lee will make Warren House his headquarters to-night."

"What! Warren House? Are you sure?"

"Yes, certain. I'm ordered to be there as a corporal in charge of the house guards. That's the way I got off duty this morning. I'm supposed to be reconnoitering."

Then suddenly General Harding saw his chance.

"I say, Griffin, this is our opportunity."

"How so?"

"Why it's as easy as falling off a log. Listen. Burton is invited to Warren House for to-night—most extraordinary thing I ever heard of, but it's a fact. He is supposed to go there to visit a young lady. Quite right. Now why shouldn't he be captured there with sham despatches on his person? Blake will be in charge of the rebel sentries. He can give in-

formation that there's a Yankee despatch-bearer in the house. The rest follows. Burton will be arrested. On his person will be found this false despatch to Humphreys—I've written it out already. It reads this way:

"'General Humphreys: We have trustworthy information that the rebel supply train is coming by the Northern Road. You must intercept it with all your force. You needn't pay any attention to the Beaver Dam Bridge route, as our information is positive that the train is coming by the Northern Road. You'll need all your force there, as General Lee is sending a strong body of cavalry to meet and defend the train. It's capture means everything, and we rely upon you.'

"There! If I'm not mistaken, that'll do the trick. When they find that despatch on Burton they'll move heaven and earth to bring the train by the Beaver Dam route, and I'll be there in the best ambush imaginable. Only get Burton captured with that despatch on him, and I'll answer for it that breakfast won't be served to Lee's army to-morrow morning."

"By Jove, Harding, you've hit upon a practical idea at last," said Griffin in delight. "That's a trick I hadn't thought of. And everything fits in. Burton wants to go to Warren House. Warren has invited him and

so has the young lady. There never was anything so preposterous, but it's all a fact. And here we've got that damned rascal Blake on the ground to work the game. There never was anything lovelier."

Carr: "But how about Burton? Will he consent? You know, of course, we can't order him on a service like that."

"We'll argue with him," answered Harding. "We'll bring all our powers of persuasion to bear on him. We'll show him how he has a chance not only to prevent a great battle and all its slaughter, but actually and immediately to end the war. Oh, we'll talk him round. Of course the chances are he'll be shot or hanged for doing the trick, but we're all used to the taking of that chance—"

Griffin: "Yes, and there was never anybody readier to take it than Ned Burton. That isn't where our difficulty will lie. You see, Ned is bitten with a really Virginian sense of honor. Since he's been in love with Buck Warren's daughter, I'm dished if he doesn't aspire to rival Buck Warren himself as a man of honor. I tell you right now that the chance of being shot or hanged won't enter into Burton's calculations. It's the honor part of the thing that's going to give us trouble, and, if you'll believe me, I don't feel much like meddling

with that. It's easy enough to say that all's fair in love and war, but is it? Damn it, I wouldn't carry that false despatch to save my life, and yet I've got to urge Ned Burton to do it. I wish war consisted of nothing but stand-up fighting."

"Oh, well, there's no use wishing for that sort of thing," said Carr. "If you're going to wish, why not wish for a fourth dimension in space, or for exemption from the tyranny of the laws of physics? Why not wish we were all angels of light, with wings growing out of our shoulder blades."

Griffin: "Well, anyhow, I don't like this job. It means disgraceful death to Burton, if he carries it out."

Harding: "Yes, of course. But think what else it means. It means the end of this war. It means many thousands of human lives saved, many thousands of women and children saved from widowhood and orphanhood. What is the life of one man in comparison with that?"

Griffin: "Yes, I know. I realize all that. But when the one life to be sacrificed to save the others happens to be that of— Oh, damn it, don't let's discuss the matter. Send for Burton and put the matter to him. He's out there on the picket lines somewhere, issuing

engraved invitations to the rebel bullets to visit his internal workings quite informally. He's the coolest hand I ever saw—except Buck Warren, of course. He simply beats the devil. Why, I've seen him—"

Harding: "Don't tell us about it, Griffin. We've no time to listen. We've business to attend to."

"And besides," interjected Carr, "you'll be writing your reminiscences some of these days, and you mustn't waste your best stories on us. Here comes Burton."

CHAPTER X

A DIVIDED DUTY

"Burton," said Griffin, when the Lieutenant joined their circle, "I believe you already know Blake of the secret service."

"Yes, I have met him before," said Burton, not very graciously.

"Well, he brings us important information," said Harding, who feared Griffin might fail in his utterly uncongenial task of persuading Burton to do a thing from which every impulse of his soul shrank in revolt. "And fortunately his tidings fit in perfectly with certain plans of your own, Lieutenant Burton. You have asked leave—contrary to every conceivable tradition of war—to visit the daughter of the rebel General Warren this evening at Warren House. If I correctly understand, you have General Warren's own invitation to do so?"

"Yes. He invited me, and I promised to be there if I could get leave."

"Good! Very good! You shall have leave, and more than that you shall have a chance to render the very highest and most important

military service possible in thus making a visit within the enemy's lines, which is in contravention of all precedent."

General Harding dearly loved to hear himself talk, particularly when opportunity offered for the use of high-sounding phrases.

"I shall be very glad, indeed," said Burton, "if I can render such a service."

"I must tell you, Burton," said Griffin, "that this service will be attended by very great danger—"

"I do not shrink from danger, General."

"No. I know that very well. Now let me explain. It is of vital importance that we shall overhaul and capture that wagon train. If the rebels get it, we're in for no end of hard fighting. If they don't get it they are starved out and simply must surrender. Now what we want is to ambush the train at Beaver Dam Bridge. But Blake hasn't been able to learn whether it is to come that way or by the Northern Road. Our little game is to *make* them bring it by Beaver Dam, and ourselves be ready to destroy it there.

"You have an invitation to visit Warren House to-night. We have information that in his anxiety to connect with that wagon train, General Lee will make Warren House his headquarters to-night.

"Now all this fits into our plans. You are to bear a false despatch addressed to General Humphreys telling him to look for the train on the Northern Road. The moment you enter Warren House, Blake will hurry to the officer of the day with information that a Federal despatch-bearer is in the house. You will be arrested and searched. When the despatch is found on you, under such circumstances, they will be sure it's genuine. They will send orders to bring the train by Beaver Dam, and we'll be ready to intercept it there."

Burton: "But, General Griffin, I can't do that."

Griffin: "I didn't think you would shrink from danger."

Burton: "From danger, no; from dishonor and treachery, yes. I'm perfectly willing to be captured with the despatches on me anywhere but in Warren House, though I know as well as you do that I shall be shot for doing it when they find out that the despatches are shams. But I can't go to Warren House as General Warren's guest and trick him to his undoing."

Carr: "But, my dear boy, it would do no good to have you captured anywhere else. They'd suspect the trick."

Harding: "And think how great a service

you will be rendering not only to us, but to them. If that train reaches them, they'll fight on, and thousands of poor fellows will bite the dust. You can stop all that. You can save thousands of lives, and spare thousands of women and children from widowhood and orphanhood. No man ever had so great a chance."

Burton: "General Griffin, if you were invited to a private house—"

Griffin: "In war? I'd jump at such a chance. We can't do our fighting in white kid gloves."

Burton: "Then you advise me to do this thing?"

Griffin (flinching a little): "Why, of course I do."

Burton: "I have always regarded you as my mentor. I will do as you say. I sincerely hope I shall be shot for doing it. Life will not mean much to me after this. But you tell me it's my duty, and I'll do it."

The three generals made haste away. They had accomplished their purpose and they did not want to contemplate their work. They climbed rocks and looked at the enemy instead.

As Burton stood there alone Corporal De Peyster returned, escorting Agatha. Delivering her into Burton's hands, the young Corporal left her to do all necessary ex-

plaining, and took himself off into the woods again.

"They wouldn't let me pass with dad. His pass called only for himself and two bearers. Will you kindly get me a permit to go to my own home?"

Burton (sorely embarrassed): "Certainly. In one minute. Just wait here."

Springing up the hill, he told Griffin of the situation and at once received the pass. When he returned to Agatha, she said with embarrassment:

"Dad has been scolding me and I am to tell you I'm sorry for what I said to you, and I am to add my invitation to his for you to come to Warren House to-night. I'm very sorry I lost my temper, and I hope you're not angry—"

Burton: "Angry? Not in the least. I'm sure you had good cause for all you said."

Agatha: "It's right nice of you to put it that way, and I reckon I'll pick the nicest flowers in the rose garden for you, just to make it up. You see, a girl don't always know how she ought to act these times."

CHAPTER XI

IN WARREN HOUSE

When General Warren arrived at his home he was in a considerable fever, and he was put to bed. But an hour later he was up again and busy with his military papers. His nature was complex and in a way contradictory. He loved ease, but he was utterly tireless in action when duty called. In his own affairs he was apt to think that nothing mattered, but when he had public duties to do he devoted himself to them with the insistent industry of a man of business. In his own affairs he habitually relegated to-day's affairs to an indefinite and perhaps never-coming to-morrow, but in affairs that concerned the public or affairs that involved the interests of others, he was as eagerly diligent in prompt performance as any bank clerk might be in making the daily balance of his books.

The type was a common one at the South, and especially in Virginia where all nature and all circumstances lured to ease, but where the sense of duty was dominant in every gentle-

man's mind—born in him, bred in him, baptized in him, by every circumstance of his life.

Late in the afternoon Tom Dabney came to Warren House, bearing a message from General Lee to General Warren. Tom Dabney had been a chronic and altogether hopeless lover of Agatha from childhood. He came now with his head hideously bandaged because of a wound which would have sent any less resolute man to hospital, but which Tom Dabney treated as he might have treated a casual headache. He was so apparently weak from starvation that Bob and Betty, by trick and device, induced him to eat—as a leaving of their supper—the hominy that constituted their only food.

His message was that General Lee would make Warren House his headquarters that night and that the supply train was expected to arrive during the night.

When this news reached General Warren's ears his first concern was for Burton.

"If he comes here," he said, "he'll be arrested and perhaps shot. At the very least he will be made a prisoner of war, and, if he is found in this house when this house is General Lee's headquarters, it will tax my influence to the limit to persuade a drumhead court-martial that he isn't here as a spy. Agatha, you must get a message to him, warning him not to come."

"I'll do it, father."

"But how? I can give your messenger a pass through our lines, but how is he to get past the Federal pickets?"

"I'll send Sappho's Jim. He's as sharp as tacks. I'll tell him to pretend he's a runaway, and he'll do it to perfection. With that blank look that he can put into his face whenever he pleases, he'd deceive the very elect. And as for getting back—"

"I don't care a—pardon me, I mean that doesn't make a damned bit of difference. Only let him get the message to Burton and he's a free nigger so far I'm concerned. Of course, if he comes back his home is here at Warren House, but if he'd rather stay over there—it's no matter."

"I'll manage it, father."

But in that Agatha was mistaken. Jim was ready enough to undertake any errand for his young mistress, but he had a holy terror of Yankees, and he had been bred by his mammy to regard a "free nigger" with loathing, contempt and pity. "Why, chile," Sappho had often said to him, "I never seed a free nigger in my life dat wasn't hungry an' ragged an' disrespectable."

So Jim, who had a bad habit of thinking, sat down soon after he had left Warren House

with his message, and thought the matter over. He had General Warren's pass to enable him to go through the Confederate picket lines, but his concern was with what might happen to him afterward. A great and frightful spectre rose in his mind. The Yankees might insist upon making a "free nigger" of him, and the thought appalled him. He would instantly become ragged, hungry, and disrespectable.

After due reflection he tore General Warren's pass to minute fragments, scattered them in the brook—or branch as he called it—and proceeded to get himself involved in the Confederate line of defense. He had not read the passport, for the simple reason that he had never learned to read, but he was fully aware that the document was intended to enable him to make his way into the Federal lines, and that if it were non-existent the Confederate pickets, he was assured, would see to it that he should do nothing of the sort. Young as he was, Jim had wrought out for himself a philosophy of life. It consisted of a single dictum: "When you're happy you'd better let things alone."

Acting upon this dogma, Jim got himself arrested, taken to the picket headquarters, and returned to Warren House under guard, as "a

runaway slave who had tried to escape to the enemy."

He did not reach Warren House until a little after midnight and the only punishment that awaited him there, as he very well knew, was a sound spanking at Sappho's hands for his failure to execute "Miss Agatha's" commission. Jim had, by long practise, become so well used to Sappho's spankings that he regarded them with the same indifference with which he regarded the occasional encroachment of shade upon his slumbers when he was sleeping peacefully in the sun. Of course, he "hollered" mightily when his mammy spanked him, but that was only by way of satisfying her conscience and assuring her that she had done her duty well.

In the meanwhile, about sunset, Lieutenant Burton, wholly unwarned, arrived at Warren House, and finding every door open, after the Virginia fashion, entered. His first encounter was with Blake.

"For God's sake, Blake," he pleaded, "hurry this thing up. Get me arrested before I have seen anybody here, before I have made myself a guest in this house. How soon can you do it?"

"In twenty minutes."

"That's too long. Make it ten. I'm afraid

somebody will come in—some member of the family."

"I'll do my best. Fifteen minutes will be enough, I reckon. Anyhow, I'll try."

"All right. For God's sake, get here and get me arrested before I meet any of the people —before I become a trusted guest of the house!"

"I'll do my best. You see, I'm really in the same boat with you."

"No, you aren't," answered Burton, "except as to the shooting or hanging part of it. You're not betraying a generous hospitality as I am. Get the thing over quick. Go! Go! I simply mustn't meet any member of this family. Hurry, Blake. If you get me arrested and carried away from here before I meet any member of the Warren family, I'll make it worth a thousand dollars in gold to you."

Thus stimulated by an appeal to his dominant passion—greed — Blake hurried away. But it was too late. He had scarcely quitted the room when Agatha entered.

Forgetting that she had not yet, in any formal fashion, accepted his love, and acting quite as if that matter had been arranged to his liking, she burst out with an exclamation of surprise, alarm and grief.

"Oh, why are you here!" she exclaimed.

"Didn't you get my message? Oh, why didn't you heed it?"

"What message?"

"Why, I sent Sappho's Jim to tell you not to come—that General Lee will occupy this house to-night. Oh, we mustn't stop to talk. They'll be here presently. You must go quick. Go out this door, and hurry. There's a short cut down by the spring house, and you can easily go around our lines. They aren't extended yet. Oh, why don't you go?"

But instead of going, Burton, who had made up his mind to stay until he should be arrested in accordance with the plot laid for the entrapping of the Confederates, set his military cap on the table and said:

"I want a word with you, Miss Agatha."

Agatha: "But, my dear Ned, there's no time. Don't you understand? Our troops will be all around this house in a few minutes, and you'll be taken as a spy. You *must* go!"

Burton: "But I am here by General Warren's invitation."

Instantly he regretted that he had said that. It seemed to him an added insult and treachery.

Agatha: "Yes, I know. But there's nothing to show for it. As soon as our people include this house within their lines, if you are found

here you'll be regarded as a spy, and you know they shoot spies."

Burton: "Not at all. They hang them."

Agatha: "How can you be so cool then?"

Burton: "I'm a soldier. It's my professional duty to be cool."

Agatha (admiringly, but in an agony of distressed apprehension): "Why *don't* you go? There is still time—but none to spare."

Burton: "Listen, Agatha! I want to tell you, while there is still time."

Agatha: "But there isn't time. You'll be caught and hanged! Oh, for my sake, go! If any harm should come to you I'd go on blaming myself forever and forever. For my sake, go! If it will hurry you I don't mind saying I love you and you can consider us two as engaged, but go, go, go!"

Burton: "Agatha, whatever happens you can have nothing to reproach yourself with. You've done your full duty in warning me, and the dear thing you just now said—that you love me—will make me happy whether life or death awaits me."

Agatha (picking up his cap and forcing it into his hand): "This is the best way out. Go! Good-bye! Go, that you may live to come again when the trouble is over, and remind me of what I said just now."

Burton: "Listen a moment, Agatha—"

Agatha: "There isn't time—"

Burton: "Yes, there is. I want to tell you. You know we all have to do our duty no matter what happens or how disagreeable it is to us."

Agatha: "Of course, we all understand that."

Burton: "I'm glad you understand that, because I've simply got to do mine—disagreeable as it is."

Agatha: "Why, of course. You've got to fight us, but we've no time now to—"

Burton: "That isn't what I meant. To-morrow, or perhaps even to-night, it will mean everything to me to know that you understand —that you love me now, and that no matter what happens, you will know and believe that I only did my duty as I understood it. I love you so, Agatha. I hope you'll always remember that."

Agatha: "Yes—I'll remember that always. But why don't you go, while there is yet a chance of your escape? If you love me, why don't you save yourself for my sake? I have accepted your offer of love. You have asked me to be your wife and I've told you I will when the war is over. Surely you owe it to me to save yourself now. Will you not go, for my sake?"

CHAPTER XII

A WOMAN WARREN OF VIRGINIA

A call of "Halt!" outside, in the voice of Blake, told Burton that at last the time had come for which he had been waiting in spite of her protestations and entreaties. Instantly Arthur Warren was heard giving other orders. "Go to the window, Zack! Guard that side door, Bill. The rest of you move round the house to the right and left and command every door and window. If anybody tries to escape shoot without challenging. Every man will be held rigidly responsible with his life."

Agatha understood the orders and their purpose, but she remembered one little door, cut in a corner since Arthur went away soldiering. She realized that by that door there was still a chance, though a slender one, of Burton's escape. She hurriedly directed him to it, and said good-bye, as she ran to the front to answer the clamorous knocking that Arthur had set up at the door. For, in her fear for her lover's safety she had locked the main

entry way, and Arthur had found the portal to his home barred to him for the first time since his birth in that house.

As soon as she left the room Blake crept into it by one of the side doors. He came only a few feet in, to make sure that Burton was still there. Burton called him by name, whereupon he said:

"Sh—you are supposed not to know me. If you recognize me the game's up. Everything's going all right. They've surrounded the house with a squad. You see, they've swallowed the bait, hook, sinker and all."

"Did you tell them my name?" asked Burton.

"No. It wouldn't do for me to seem to know too much. I told 'em only that the bearer of secret Federal despatches was in the house. The house is surrounded and closely guarded, and the orders are that General Warren shall take charge of the affair."

Burton: "General Warren! Her father and my generous host! I say, Blake, this thing is horrible."

Blake: "Are you going to flunk after all the work I've done and all the risk I've taken?"

Burton: "No, I'm not going to flunk. Arrest me now. Seize my despatch, and have the thing over with."

Blake: "That won't do. They'd suspect. General Warren himself must find the despatch on your person. I'll go and tell him."

On that errand the spy left the room. Soon afterward Agatha re-entered it, believing that her lover had got safely away. When she found him still there, her astonishment and grief were great, but there was no time even for hurried protestations or reproaches. Believing that there might even yet be time, she called to him to follow her and advanced toward a door. As she cautiously opened it, the glittering point of a bayonet barred her way and the voice of Zack Biggs reinforced it.

"Halt! I'm sorry, Miss Agatha, but the orders is as how no human bein' is to pass this door, nor any other door, nor yit any winder o' this house till we git through with a little job we've got on our hands. Shet the door, please!"

Agatha apologized sweetly, and tried another door. There stood big Bill Peary with his bayonet presented.

Then, turning to Burton, she said in an agony of distress and apprehension:

"Oh, why did you stay! Arthur has surrounded the house. He's searching for some Federal despatch-bearer that he's heard is here. He's in the north wing now, and he'll

be here presently, and his men will see you. It's too bad, too bad!"

Then a sudden thought struck her.

"May be if I go to him and explain that you're here by our invitation, and that I positively know there's no despatch-bearer in this room, may be he'd not come in here and subject you to embarrassment. I'll go—"

Burton: "It is of no use, Agatha. I'm the man your brother is looking for, though he doesn't know it. There's the despatch (holding it out) that he is sent to capture."

Agatha (with hauteur): "Then you came here, nominally to visit me—"

Burton: "No, really to visit you, for I love you, Agatha. But, unfortunately, I have this despatch on my person and must take the consequences. You'd better unlock the doors —I saw you lock them a while ago—and quit the room. It would be embarrassing for you to be found here with me behind locked doors."

Agatha: "That is true. I'll go up stairs. Give me that despatch."

Without waiting for him to obey her command, she snatched the paper from his hand. In the struggle that ensued for its possession, the girl's slipper fell from her foot, and it served her as a suggestion. Recovering this

bit of footgear, she placed the despatch in the toe of it and replaced it on her foot.

Burton: Agatha, you must not. This is a terrible thing! You must not be mixed up in it. You must not."

Agatha: "I won't get mixed up, I reckon. No man will ever venture to remove a shoe from my foot in this house and live to tell what he found in it."

Burton: "I'm sorry, but I must insist upon having those orders. They must not be in anybody's possession but mine. I—"

Agatha: "I'll not read a line of them and you shall have them back when the trouble is over."

Meanwhile Arthur was insistently knocking at the locked doors and clamorously demanding entrance.

"All right, Arthur," she cried. "I'll open the doors, only please don't shoot."

As the young Confederate entered the room with a squad of armed men at his back, Burton decided upon his course of conduct. Thus far, he realized he had been a helpless puppet in the hands of fate. He decided that he would continue to be just that—saying nothing, doing nothing, and simply letting that happen which blind Fate might decree.

Arthur (astonished): "Why, hello, Ned!

You here! And at such a time? Then you are the man we're looking for—the man with the despatches?"

Burton: "How do you do, Arthur?"

Agatha: "Listen, Arthur! I locked the doors because Lieutenant Burton is here as a guest of Warren House, by father's invitation and mine. He came not knowing that our military lines were to be so extended as to include this house within them. I wanted to protect him; it isn't like Virginia hospitality to treat a guest in this way."

Arthur: "I'm mighty sorry, Ned, but under the circumstances, I'll have to put you under arrest, and ask you for your side-arms."

Without a moment's hesitation Burton handed his arms to the soldier who advanced to receive them.

A few minutes later General Warren came in, in response to a summons which told him the despatch-bearer had been arrested. Mrs. Warren accompanied him with the purpose of seeing to it that he should not too much excite himself or in any way over-exert his feeble and fast failing strength.

When Burton was recognized as the culprit, there was something like consternation in the family, for all of them liked Ned Burton. But all of them were loyal to their own cause, and

General Warren, somewhat in the spirit of the "Roman father," put aside his feelings, his liking for Ned Burton, his instincts of generous hospitality, and all the rest of it. As resolutely as if Burton had been the veriest stranger instead of being well-nigh a member of the household, he ordered that the young Federal officer should be taken to another room and searched. Burton, meanwhile, stood upon his privilege as a prisoner, refusing to answer questions, to explain himself, or to say a word of any sort.

Presently Arthur and his men returned with Burton, reporting that they had found no despatches on his person. Forgetting the delicately critical character of the situation for the moment, and thinking of Burton as his friend and guest rather than his prisoner, General Warren turned to him and asked:

"Are you carrying despatches, Ned?" Then instantly he said:

"Pardon me. I had no right to ask that, and of course you won't answer. I forgot myself."

Turning to Blake, and regarding him sternly, he said:

"You reported that this officer bore despatches. What proof of that did you have, sir?"

Blake: "I saw the despatches in his posses-

sion, sir. When I looked into this room through that window."

General Warren: "Then why in the name of all that's sane didn't you arrest him and secure possession of them? Are you an idiot or only a plain, ordinary damned fool?"

Blake: "Why, your daughter came into the room, sir, as I was peeking in through the window, and as she locked the doors I thought it best to report the matter. He certainly had the paper in this room, sir, when your daughter entered it. If he hasn't got it now, she must have seen what he did with it."

General Warren (indignantly): "Will you remember, Blake, that you are speaking of my daughter, Miss Warren? When you say she locked herself in with—why, sir—"

Arthur: "She did lock the door, dad, but it's easily explained. You see—but I'll tell you about that afterward." Then turning to his sister he asked: "Do you know where that paper is, sis'?"

Blake, snakelike in all his movements, slid behind Agatha while Arthur was speaking, and muttered, as he passed her, "don't tell, let them find out."

What his motive was in thus warning the girl it is idle to conjecture. Probably he could not himself have explained the impulse.

General Warren (to Ned): "I'm sorrier than I can tell you, Ned, to treat an honored guest in this way."

At the words "honored guest" Ned Burton flinched, but he made no answer.

General Warren (to Arthur and his men): "Take the prisoner out and search him more thoroughly. Strip him to the buff, and examine his clothes with needles. The despatches are on him. You *must* find them."

When the men retired with Burton, the gentle old Virginian turned to Mrs. Warren, and said:

"Mother, I'm sure Agatha knows where that despatch is. Let us find out. It means everything to us at this crisis. You see, I know that despatch relates to the supply train, and everything depends on that. The Yankees have a plan for intercepting it, and that despatch tells what it is. We simply must find it. Come here, Agatha!"

The girl went to her father's knee.

General Warren: "Tell me what you know of that despatch."

Agatha stood dumb.

General Warren: "Answer me, girl! Why don't you look at me? What's the matter with you? I only ask you, my dear daughter, what you know of this despatch. It vitally concerns

our army and it is my imperative, military duty to discover it. Do you know where it is?"

Agatha: "I'm right sorry, dad, but I'm not at liberty to—"

General Warren (indignantly): "Not at liberty? Not at liberty to tell me—your father—facts known to you that vitally concern the welfare, and even the existence, of General Lee's army? What do you mean, girl? That's no way for a daughter of Warren House to talk to her father."

Mrs. Warren: "She didn't mean what she said, dear."

Agatha: "Yes, I did. I meant every word and every syllable of it, and I'll stand by it. My honor is involved and I'll stand by my honor as resolutely as any *man* of the Warren family ever did by his. Dad, this is a thing between you and Lieutenant Burton. You've no right to drag me into it. You're violating all the laws of hospitality, anyhow. Lieutenant Burton is in this house by your invitation and mine. It's the first time I ever heard of a guest of Warren House being searched by order of his host."

The girl's words stung like whiplashes. In a sense they were true and General Warren knew the fact. But in addition to being a guest, Burton was an avowed military enemy,

and far above General Warren's duty as host there was his duty as a military officer. He was in no mood to chop logic or split hairs with his daughter. He was wrathful in a degree very unusual with so gentle-souled a gentleman, and his daughter's defiance—the first thing of the kind he had ever encountered—exasperated him. Turning upon Agatha he said:

"Do you impertinently assume to teach your father the laws of hospitality? Surely you forget yourself. I know my duty in all the relations of life. Lieutenant Burton knew what my duty would be if he came to this house on a social visit and brought military despatches with him. Now I will stand no more nonsense. Tell me where he hid that despatch."

Agatha: "He did not hide it."

General Warren: "Then you did. Where did you hide it?"

Then, in the boundless loyalty of her soul to her lover, Agatha fibbed outrageously. She would willingly have died in this crisis to save Ned Burton; why should she hesitate to make the smaller sacrifice of lying to that end?

Suddenly she turned upon her father and said:

"It's all my fault, dad. When Ned came here about sunset he intended only to make his

excuses and run away again, because he had some duty to do that he had not anticipated. It is all my fault that he stayed."

General Warren: "Your fault? What do you mean?"

Agatha: "Yes, my fault, dad. He begged and pleaded for permission to go away. I kept him in spite of himself. I simply made him stay, and so, you see, it is all my fault. He was on pins and needles to get away. He even said it wasn't honorable for him to stay at Warren House under the circumstances. I taunted him with cowardice. I told him he was afraid to stay, and so, of course, he just had to stay in vindication of his own courage. It was all my doing—all my fault."

General Warren (in a towering rage): "And that's all you know about it, miss?"

Agatha: "Yes, dad, that's all I know about it."

General Warren: "You are deliberately prevaricating—I can't say 'lying' to a lady and that lady my daughter."

Agatha (quivering with agitation): "I—I—I—"

General Warren: "Silence! You can only make matters worse by talking. Now Lieutenant Burton had a military despatch in possession when you locked yourself up with

him in this room—a shameful thing for a woman of the Warren family to do. You know what you or he did with that despatch. Tell me."

Agatha: "I'm right sorry, dad, but I will not tell. It would be treachery."

At that moment, and before General Warren could so far control his indignation as to speak, Arthur and his squad returned with the prisoner.

Arthur: "It's no use, dad. There are no papers on the prisoner. Our search has been exhaustive."

General Warren: "Then we'll take other methods. I'll find that despatch if I have to tear down every wall of Warren House. Go on, boys! Search till the lightning strikes you."

Agatha started to leave the room, unnoticed, but Blake stood in the way, and said:

"General Warren, if you let your daughter leave this room, you'll never find that despatch, because five minutes more and it will not exist."

General Warren (indignantly): "What do you mean, sir?"

Blake: "Only that she must know where the despatch is."

General Warren: "Silence, sir! I want none

of your remarks concerning my daughter or my duty. If you impertinently open your head again, I'll send you to the guard house."

Then turning to Agatha, he said, in the gentlest tones imaginable:

"Daughter, I think you do not understand. This is not a personal matter at all. The despatch we are looking for is one giving directions for the capture of our precious wagon train of provisions. If we find the despatch and detain its bearer, we shall know how to get the train through. If we can't, then we must all starve with what patience we can."

Agatha (suddenly realizing the situation and understanding the probable consequences of her obstinacy): "Do you mean the supply train, dad? Do you mean I'm imperilling that?"

General Warren: "Yes, daughter. That is what I mean."

Agatha: "Send everybody out of the room but just us. I have something to tell you."

At a sign from General Warren, Arthur marched all the rest out of the place, including Blake, Burton, and the guard. Then, facing her father and mother with all the courage of all the Warrens in her face she said:

"Lieutenant Burton loves me and I love him. He and I are engaged to become husband

and wife when the war is over, subject, my father, to your approval, of course. No daughter of Warren House would ever marry without the approval of the head of the house. Now I want to say this: through Lieutenant Burton's momentary carelessness, I know where the despatch he bore is. But I want to add that in loyalty to my future husband, I will die before I will tell. There you have the last word of a Warren of Virginia—for we enduring women of the house are Warrens of Virginia, just as truly as you daring and doing men are. You have my last word."

CHAPTER XIII

AGATHA'S SURRENDER

Two thoughts entered Burton's mind as he was held in durance in the dining-room. One of them was generous and chivalric; the other was military.

His first thought was that Agatha was undergoing tortures in his behalf and that it was his manly duty to rescue her from her position of embarrassment, and himself assume its responsibilities. His second thought was that, after all, it was the marrow and essence of his mission that he and his despatch should be captured. If, by any ingenuity of Agatha's, there should be failure to arrest him and discover the false despatch, his mission must fail.

Moved by both considerations, he turned to Arthur, as the two sat there in the dining-room, and said:

"Take me to General Warren. I'll tell him where the despatch is."

A minute later he was in General Warren's presence, and he had with him all there was of his manhood.

Addressing Agatha first, he said:

"I voluntarily release you from all obligations of secrecy. I ask you to give to General Warren the despatch you snatched from my hand and secreted."

"I decline to do so," she said. And she added no words of any kind.

"Why do you decline? The despatch was mine only."

"I decline only because I have learned that the surrender of that despatch may imperil your life, Lieutenant Burton."

Burton: "My life is not to be considered."

Agatha: "By you, no. But by me, yes. Your life is very precious to me."

Burton: "Thank you. I appreciate that. But there are commanding reasons why this despatch shall be discovered. I cannot explain, but I tell you that unless you surrender it to General Warren, I shall tell him where it is."

Agatha: "Then you, too, are a traitor?"

Burton: "No, I'm true, and in the end you'll find it so. Oh, if you only knew the complexities of the case, Agatha! If you only understood! Now I ask you to deliver my despatch to General Warren."

Knowing as he did that the despatch was a false and misleading one, designed to entrap

General Warren to his undoing, Burton shrank from this appeal. But Agatha misinterpreted the shrinking. She thought it meant a still lingering desire that the despatch should not be discovered, and a manly determination that it should, for her protection from annoyance. So turning to her father, she said:

"Dad, you know Lieutenant Burton got himself into all this trouble on my account?"

"Yes," answered Warren. "I know that, and that's what makes it imperative that I should have that despatch. It guarantees its genuineness.

Burton: "No, General Warren, it guarantees nothing. I refuse to bring a woman into—"

General Warren: "To me, sir, it guarantees the genuineness of the despatches you bear—whatever they may be. Otherwise the remarkably lax code of honor that prevails in your army, sir, with respect to written communications might make me doubt and hesitate. I mean no offense to you, sir. You are not responsible for what men in higher place do. There's Bill Griffin, for instance. I've known him actually to commit forgery in the matter of despatches for the purpose of deceiving an honorable foe. Agatha, you now realize the importance—"

Agatha: "Yes, dad."

General Warren: "I must have that paper."

Agatha: "No, dad." Then throwing back her head in the Warren fashion and with all the Warren courage in her voice, she said:

"We may as well make an end of this. I have my honor, dad, as you have yours, and I will maintain mine as resolutely as you maintain yours. I will not tell you where that paper is, neither now nor at any future time—never, never, never! I swear to that on the honor of a Warren, a daughter of Warren House. Turn me out of doors—drive me into the desolate night, if you will. Repudiate me. Abhor me. Make of me an outcast if you will. But you shall not force from me the revelation of a secret which my sense of honor bids me hold sacred. I have said my say. Now do your do."

Burton: "Agatha, you and I are betrothed. In the name of the love that lies between us, I entreat you to yield to General Warren's wish. If you refuse, I shall myself tell him where the paper is."

Agatha: "But your life is at stake."

Burton: "A soldier's life doesn't count. Give him the paper! I beg you, I command you."

Agatha: "A woman is under authority of her father, her brother, and her affianced husband. She must obey. I will obey."

With that she turned her back to the rest, pulled off her slipper, withdrew the paper, and replaced the shoe. It was a matter of sacred principle with the young women of Virginia in that time to let no man see their feet, even when encased in the daintiest of footgear. Turning to her father and extending the paper she said:

"I yield to authority, against my conscience. Somehow, I feel that disaster lurks in this because it is wrong. Something about it is wrong. There's the paper, dad. If harm comes of it, the fault is not mine."

General Warren had hastily run his eye over the false despatch, and he eagerly answered:

"Harm? Why, girl, its our salvation. This is an order from Griffin to General Humphreys to support Sheridan in an attack on the supply train on the North Road. Hurry, Arthur! Take two companies of cavalry and go to meet the train. Bring it by the Beaver Dam Road. I've turned the trick on old Bill Griffin this time for sure. His men will cool their heels over on the North Road while we'll bring the wagon train through over Beaver Dam Bridge. I was never so tickled in my life. We're saved, and Bill Griffin's little game is called for a finish. We'll get food for the army. The boys'll have breakfast to-morrow

morning, and then we'll put up the fight of our lives. Oh, it's simply glorious! And to think it's Bill Griffin I've caught napping! Why, I'd give ten years of my life for this night's triumph.

"There, the army's coming. General Lee will be here in a few minutes, and you, mother, shall place in his hands the captured despatch that means new life to the Army of Northern Virginia. Get your bonnet on, and your wraps. We'll meet him as he should be met, with hospitality and great good news."

CHAPTER XIV

AT FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

Nobody slept in the Warren House that night.

General Lee, in his rooms upstairs, was wakeful because he sadly knew that the end of the long struggle was at hand. He was already in correspondence with General Grant with regard to the surrender of the fragment that remained to him of the resistless army he had commanded. Only God and he knew how small that fragment was. Of his hundred remaining guns, fifty had been captured that afternoon. There remained to him a scant eleven thousand muskets, carried by starving and exhausted men, with which to oppose a hundred and fifty thousand men and three hundred guns.

He felt that there was reason and common sense in General Grant's suggestion that he ought to surrender in a hopeless contest, in order to save the needless sacrifice of human lives, the needless widowing of women, and

the needless orphaning of children, North and South.

Nevertheless, he knew that the fragment left to him of his army, stood ready to fight to the end. He knew that if that wagon train should get through, and if his men should get a breakfast, no battle that had occurred since the beginning of the war might compare in intensity with that which his eleven thousand men would make on that April morning.

But he understood the hopelessness of it also, and the very valor of his men was a warning to him to spare them.

General Warren did not sleep, because it was his duty to command the advance of the right wing, and to bring that supply train safely through. Misled by Burton's false despatch, he believed that his task was easy. But, optimist that he was, he sat up all night, with a fever on him, in anticipation of the arrival of the train by virtue of his interception of Griffin's orders.

Burton did not sleep, for obvious reasons. He was troubled in his conscience because he had deceived General Warren to his undoing. He was personally troubled by the fact that the inevitable discovery of the trick he had played must result in his own shameful death as a malefactor, and, worse still, as he reck-

oned things, in the loss of Agatha's love, and even her respect.

So far, of course, the trick he had played was unsuspected. His position was at once that of an honorable foe and an honored guest. Mindful of this, General Warren, about midnight, said to his wife:

"I say, Ruth, we must take care of Burton. Quite unintentionally he has served us in a way that no other living man could. He has made it certain that we shall get that food train. I don't want him to get into any difficulty. He must be back within the Yankee lines before morning. Here's a pass for him that'll carry him through our pickets. Give it to Agatha and tell her he is not to use it till after the wagon train gets here. Then he can slip away and no harm will be done. He's altogether a good fellow, and Agatha loves him. There. Give that paper to her."

About that time Blake, who was corporal of the headquarters guard, slipped into the room in which Burton was striding to and fro in unimaginable disgust with himself. To Blake the young lieutenant said:

"This is horrible. It is despicable. I came under this roof as a trusted guest, I have betrayed its owner and its people to their destruction. Every minute now I am listening

for the musketry at Beaver Dam Bridge. I say, Blake, I cannot endure this longer, and I will not. I'm going to make a break out of here so that your guards shall shoot me!"

"Sh—" said Blake. "Somebody's coming."

He slipped out through the door, just in time to escape discovery by Agatha, who at that moment entered the room, bearing an old-fashioned tray. To Burton she said:

"You had no supper last night. I've come to prepare you an early breakfast with my own hands. You must eat it and then you must go away. My father has given me this paper. It will pass you through our lines. He says you have done us the greatest service imaginable, though you didn't mean it. He doesn't want you to get into any trouble about it with your own people. He says you have enabled us to get the supply train through, and we shall be your debtor when it gets here. It ought to get here soon. It's nearly four o'clock."

What torture all this was to Burton is not easily imagined. Here he was consulting his watch every three minutes, and listening for that outbreak of musketry and cannon fire which should reveal what he regarded as his infamous treachery. And yet he dared not take the pass and go. In fact, he did not care

to do so. In any case, Agatha must learn what he had done, and nothing else mattered.

Then came his temptation—an irresistible one. He loved this woman far more than he loved his life, and as he watched her preparing breakfast for him, he saw visions and dreamed dreams. Forgetting all else, forgetting the situation, he blindly rushed upon his fate. This young woman was his affianced bride. She was already beginning that ministry to him that womanhood loves to render to men loved and honored.

He went to her as she bent over the fire preparing his breakfast. He passed his arm around her waist, and as she stood erect he kissed her passionately.

"I love you, Agatha. God knows whether you will love me or think of me even with kindly tolerance after this terrible night is over. But I love you with all my soul, and it is the one supreme triumph of my life that you love me in return."

"I do love you, Edgar." That was all she said as she sank into his arms.

CHAPTER XV

THE UTTERMOST END

Suddenly Ned Burton was awakened from his dream of love and thrust upon his nightmare of treachery and unspeakable disgrace.

The sound of heavy and continuous firing was heard from the direction of Beaver Dam Bridge. It lasted not for long, because the assailing force there, as Burton knew, outnumbered the defenders of the supply train many times to one. When it ceased Ned Burton knew that his work was done, that his treachery had accomplished its purpose, that the supply train was captured, that the dearest hope ever cherished by the host under whose roof he was a guest was baffled and brought to naught.

A few minutes later Arthur, staggering with rage and grief and disappointment, broke into the house, calling for his father, to whom he reported the disaster.

"But it cannot be," said General Warren. "Those despatches—"

"They were false," called Arthur. "They were a trick, and there stands the trickster, Ned Burton. Come out, you coward, and fight me like a man, if you dare. There are twenty of us who have sworn—oh, don't flinch, we'll take you one at a time. We won't double teams on you. Come on."

Agatha: "Arthur, you forget. Lieutenant Burton is a prisoner of war. He has no arms."

Arthur: "I'll furnish him with arms, damn him!"

General Warren: "Peace, children. There are general orders covering this sort of thing. Lieutenant Burton has forfeited the privilege even of fighting for his life. He will be hanged at ten o'clock this morning. Arthur, there may still be some fighting to do, or, in lieu of that, some dying. Go to your post. Take command of your men. General Lee may order a general assault at daylight. If he does, neither you nor I must come out of it alive, unless we come out triumphant. Lieutenant Burton will await his fate here. The house is adequately guarded, and he has no arms with which to destroy himself in shame for what he has done. I go now to my command to be ready for whatever General Lee wants done."

No sooner was the room cleared than Agatha ran to Burton, saying:

"Oh, to think you used me in this trick! To think I let you kiss me and hold me in your arms!"

Then staggering back, she exclaimed:

"Worse still! Worse still! Worse still, I still love you and want to save you. Here's a door! Go! You still have my father's pass through our lines. They forgot to take that away. Use it. Go!"

Burton straightened himself up, confronting her.

"Agatha," he said, "it may be an infamous thing that I've done, under orders and in fulfillment of my duty as I have understood it, but I am not altogether a coward that I should escape now under your father's safe conduct, given before he knew. See! I am tearing it into unrecognizable fragments. I will remain here to await my punishment."

The entrance of guards under orders to hold Burton in close confinement ended the interview. Sappho was there to take Agatha to her room and minister to her overstrained nerves.

. . . . . .

The appointed hour of ten o'clock, set for

Lieutenant Burton's execution under general orders, did not come on that ninth day of April, eighteen hundred and sixty-five.

Early in the morning General Lee surrendered what was left of that superb fighting machine, the Army of Northern Virginia, and the war came to an end.

On that morning the starved Confederates fed full and fatly upon Federal rations, issued by General Grant's order even before the terms of surrender were agreed upon in writing. While the scribes were setting down on paper the agreement made between the greatest commander of the Union Army and the greatest commander of Confederate forces, General Lee leaned over to General Grant's ear, and said: "My men are starving."

The response came instantly, not in words of sympathy to General Lee, but in words of command to General Grant's own chief commissary:

"Issue rations to General Lee's men instantly."

With the surrender, of course, there was an end of General Lee's authority. The orders under which Burton must have been hanged were no longer of any force.

Without seeing any member of the family,

without a farewell of any kind, and feeling himself utterly, hopelessly, and forever disgraced, Burton quietly walked away from Warren House.

BOOK FOURTH

CHAPTER FIRST AND LAST

It was several years later that General Griffin wandered down into Virginia again, in citizen's clothing, and on peaceful business this time. Finding himself one day within a few miles of Warren House, he walked over.

The first person he met there with whom he could claim anything like acquaintance was Sappho. He encountered her in the rose garden and she received him—as she afterward explained—"with mingled emotions." As one who had been an honored guest in Warren House, she was disposed to welcome him cordially; but as what she called "a Yankee ossifer," she was disposed to hold him aloof. Nevertheless, she permitted him to sit upon a bench and engage her in conversation.

Griffin: "How are things down here, Sappho?"

Sappho: "Oh, jes' about de same as ever, sir, 'ceptin' dey's altogether different, of course."

Griffin: "Yes, I see. I can easily understand that. How's your master?"

Sappho: "Oh, he's jes de same, only older."

Griffin: "What's he doing now?"

Sappho: "He's engaged in agricultural pursuits, sir."

Griffin: "You mean plowing and hoeing with his own hands, poor old chap?"

Sappho: "Well, yes, sir. You see, when us colored folks was sot free, every no 'count nigger what could do anything quit an' went away to do it. Only us what didn't know how to do nothin' stayed on, an' I reckon it's fell pretty hard on ole Mastah, particular as all de no 'count white trash what was lef' over from de Confederate Army is always a hangin' roun' here a waitin' for master to feed 'em, when" —at this point Sappho stood up to deliver her impressive utterance—"when in strictly speakin' circumlocutionary fact, he ain't got nothin' to eat hisself."

Griffin: "Of course, you colored people are free."

Sappho: "Yes, an' equal, too. Dat's de devil of it. Dat no 'count ole Jones nigger, Mandy, says she's jes' as good as me now, an' I ain't got nothin' to show to the contrariwise, though I was born an' raised a Warren o' Virginia. What's the use of livin'

ef you're a goin' to 'bliterate de social distinctions?"

Griffin: "It *is* hard, of course. But tell me, Sappho—is your master really so poor? Hasn't he plenty to eat?"

Sappho: "I'd scorn to be questioned 'bout family affairs, sir."

Griffin: "Of course. And you're quite right, Sappho. Oh, hello! Buck," as General Warren came out into the rose garden. "How are you, old comrade? I'm down here looking up statistics for the government, and I thought I'd come by Warren House. Indeed, I was under orders to come by. General Grant is President now, you know, and he told me to hunt you up and get you to do certain things for us—"

Warren: "I'm too old, Bill. I can plow for half a day at a time, but I haven't any head left—except to dream with. But, I say, you'll come to dinner? Mother, Agatha—" as the two came out of the house—"Old Bill Griffin is going to dine with us to-day. It'll be like old times."

Agatha plucked her father's sleeve, and said to him, anxiously, under her voice:

"But, father, we haven't a piece of meat in the house."

"Tell Bob to catch a fish, then," he an-

swered. "The hospitality of Warren House is the same whether the dinner is of truffled wild fowl or of ashcake. It is the welcome that counts."

Just then General William Griffin, U.S.A., was moved to lie like a gentleman.

"Of course, I'll come and dine with you, Buck," he said; "only I've got to ride over to the court house first to send some despatches. And that reminds me. You know I never could get over being a boy. While I was over there this morning, they had a shooting match for a particularly fine spring lamb. I took a chance, and I won it over all your sharpshooters, Buck. You see, my nerves were steadier than they used to be when we were shooting at you fellows and you were shooting back. That lamb wasn't shooting back, and so I won it. But I forgot all about it till now. I'm hungry, famished, starved, to crunch the soft brisket bones of a forequarter of spring lamb as only an old Virginia cook can roast it. May I send it over? Will Miss Agatha have it cooked for me? You see, up North what they call spring lamb is apt to be dated from two or three springs back. Miss Agatha, if I hurry that lamb over to you, will you let me dine on it to-day?"

Agatha: "Why, of course, General Griffin. I only wish we had lambs of our own to offer

you. Perhaps by the next time you come we'll have some."

Griffin: "Oh, I say, Warren, I have a young friend with me, and I'd like very much to bring him with me."

General Warren: "Any friend of yours, Bill, will be welcome to Warren House, of course. Who is he?"

Griffin: "Do you remember Lieutenant Burton—"

General Warren: "Somebody get me my shotgun, quick. If that man comes I'll want it and two charges of buckshot. Why, sir—"

Griffin: "Listen, Buck. You and I know what war is. It's all hell, as Sherman says. Well, there are a good many kinds of deviltry in hell, and what that young fellow did wasn't done willingly, I assure you. It was done only under urging, and in part I was responsible for it. It wasn't meant to injure you—"

General Warren: "Listen, Bill. Don't let us argue that matter. We'll get on better otherwise. He used my daughter, sir, as a decoy. No, I won't argue it. But don't let him come here, or my shotgun will grow active again. Good day, Bill. You'll be back to dinner?"

Griffin: "Yes, of course, and I'm going to enjoy some real old Virginia corn pone with that damned lamb that I didn't know what to

do with till Agatha agreed to have it cooked for me. I'll be back by four—that's your dinner hour, isn't it?"

As he rode back to the Court House, Griffin encountered Ned Burton. To him he said:

"You are *persona non grata,* Ned, at Warren House—at least so far as the head of the house is concerned. He talks shotgun and buckshot."

"I understand, perfectly," answered the young man. "But I have a promise to fulfill, and I must take the chances of shotguns and buckshot."

Griffin: "All right, young fellow. I admire your spirit, and if I were of your age I'd take the same chances for the same girl."

A few minutes later Burton dismounted at the outer gates and made his way on foot to the rose garden.

There General Warren was resting after his morning's plowing. Agatha, seeing that he was disposed to sleep, spread a handkerchief over his head and silently withdrew. As she did so she encountered Burton, and haughtily received him. Burton was prepared for that.

"I do not come to you," he said, "as the lover you once accepted. I come to you as an honest man who once made a promise and who seeks now to fulfill it. Here are papers. They make

IN HIS DREAMS HE MUTTERED MEMORIES OF HEROES GONE.

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yours all that is mine. You may accept or reject them, but whether you accept or reject them, I shall leave them here, and they are in such form that they make the property yours whether you will or will not. If you don't take it, your heirs must. I love you, Agatha. That's all."

The old general had meanwhile fallen into sleep, and in his dreams he muttered memories of heroes gone—of Ashby, Jeb Stuart, Stonewall Jackson, and the rest—"

Agatha: "H'sh. Don't wake him. He's growing old, poor dad. But he's violent still in his temper. He doesn't know how to forgive."

Burton: "But you do, Agatha? You'll take in good faith what I offer in good faith? You'll use it to make his old age comfortable?"

Agatha: "How can I, Ned? My father has spoken—I must obey. I must say to you now what I wrote you yesterday—'Howdy and good-bye.'"

Burton: "You do not mean that, Agatha—the good-bye part of it. How can you? You know I love you and you love me."

Agatha: "Yes, I know that. But—"

Burton: "There is no but in such a case. Agatha—"

Agatha: "No, no, no, Ned. It can never be.

I'm what they call a war-widow. I can never marry against my father's will, and his will is fixed. My heart is breaking as I say good-bye, but I must say good-bye."

Sobbing, shaken to the very foundations of her being, the girl retreated into the house.

As Burton stood there awaiting he knew not what, General Warren, who had witnessed the scene and heard all that was said, threw the kerchief from his head, rose from his seat, and advanced toward the younger man.

"Young man," he said, "for years past I haven't liked a hair in your head. But my daughter loves you and I love my daughter. Let us be friends. Dine with us to-day. *The war is over!*"

THE END

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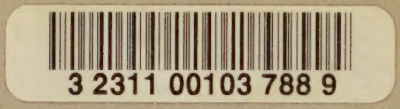

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